

THE SPLENDID SPUR

By A. T. QUILLER COUCH

A romance of England in 1642, with a hero whom adventure marked for a series of thrilling experiences in love and war.

CHAPTER I.

WAR on Nov. 29, A. D. 1642—a clear, frosty day—that the King, with the Prince of Wales (newly recovered of the measles), the Princes Rupert and Maurice, and a great company of lords and gentlemen, horse and foot, came marching back to us from Reading. I was a scholar of Trinity College in Oxford at that time, and may begin my history on the same afternoon, when going to Mr. Hob Drury for my fencing lesson. I found his lodgings empty, and, finding an easy cushion in the window, sat down to await him.

The window looked down, at the height of ten feet or so, upon a bowling-green at the back of the Crown Tavern, and across it to a rambling wing of the same inn; the fourth side being but an old wall, with a sycamore growing against it. 'Twas already twilight, and in the darkening house, over the green, was now one casement brightly lit, the curtains undrawn, and within a company of noisy drinkers round a table. They were gaming, as was easily told by their clinking of the dice and frequent oaths.

The sycamore was a broad tree, and against the trunk a garden bench rested. On this a man was now seated.

He was reading a little book, but with a sharp look now and then toward the lighted window, as if the revellers disturbed him. His back was partly turned to me; and I could but make a guess at his face, but a plenty of silver hair fell over his fur collar, and his shoulders were bent a great deal. I judged him between fifty and sixty.

CHAPTER II.

'Twas 4 o'clock before I dropped asleep in my bed in Trinity, and my last thoughts were still busy with the words I had

heard. Nor, on the morrow, did I fare any better with me; so that, at rhetoric lecture, our president—Dr. Ralph Kettle—took me by the ears before the whole class. But even a rhetoric lecture must have an end, and so, tossing my gown to the porter, I set off at last for Magdalen Bridge, where the new barricado was building along the Physic Garden, in front of the

The day was dull and lowering, and scarcely I past the small gate in the city wall when I was struck of hail and sleet drove me to shelter in the Pig Market (or Procholum) before the Divinity School. Here I found a great company of people already driven by the same cause.

I heard a stir in the crowd behind me, and some one calling, "Who'll buy? Who'll buy?"

Turning, I saw a young man, very gaily dressed, moving quickly about at the far end of the Pig Market, and behind him an old lackey, bent double with the weight of two great baskets that he carried. The baskets were filled with books, clothes and gewgaws of all kinds; and 'twas a young gentleman that hawked his wares himself.

With his curly and womanish face, no less than the amber cloak with the black bars, I knew him at once for the same I had seen yesterday among half in front of

"Ha!" he cried, pulling off his plumed hat, and bowing low, "a scholar, I perceive. Let me serve you, my young man. I have a pair of Saint George's, and he picked out a thin brown quarto and held it up; "written by Master Peter Heylin; a ripe book, and my shilling, and the price a poor two shillings."

Now all this while I was considering what to do. So, as I put my hand in my pocket and drew out the shilling, I said very slowly, looking him in the eyes (but softly, so that the lackey might not hear): "So, thus you feed your expenses at the divinity school, my shilling, no doubt, is for Luke Settle, as well as the rest."

For the moment, under my look, he went white to the lips; then, clasping his hands, he came to me, and answered me, red as a turkey-cock: "Shall be a parson, yet, Master Settle, but art in a damn'd hurry, it seems."

I was standing there and looking after him, turning over in my hand the Life of Saint George, when my fingers were aware of a slip of paper between the pages. Pulling it out, I saw 'twas scribbled over with writing and figures, as follows:

"Mr. Anthony Killigrew, his account for Oct. 25th, 1642.—For his accoutrements, 2d.; for coffee, 4d.; for sewing my coat, 6d.; for bowls, 5s. 10d.; for bleeding me, 1s. 6d.; for ye King's special aid; for spic wine (with Marjory), 2s. 4d.; for seeing ye Rhinoceros 4d.; for ye Ranters-go-round, 8d.; for a pair of silver buttons, 2s. 6d.; for apples, 2s. 4d.; for ale, 8d.; for a dice, 11d. 6s.; for spic wine (again), 4s. 6d."

And so on.

As I glanced my eye down this paper, a great feeling of pity came over me; not only at the name of Anthony—the name I had heard spoken in the bowling-green last night—but also to see that monstrous item of 211 odd spent on the dice. 'Twas such a boy, too, after all. I hurried after him, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"I think, sir," said I, "this paper is your own."

"I thank you," he answered, taking it, and eyeing me. "Is there anything besides, you wish to say?"

"An odd deal, maybe, if your name be Anthony," said I, "if your name be Anthony, you are a scholar of Trinity College, are you not?"

"Master Anthony Killigrew is my name, sir; now serving under Lord Bernard Stewart in His Majesty's troop of guards."

"And mine is Jack Marvel," said I. "Upon this I began my tale at once, but hardly had come to the meeting of the two men on the bowling-green, when he interrupted me politely: "I think, Master Marvel, as you are like to be a story of some moment, I will send this fellow back to my lodgings."

He dismissed his lackey and strolled off with me to the Trinity Grove, where, walking up and down, I told of all that I had heard and seen the night before.

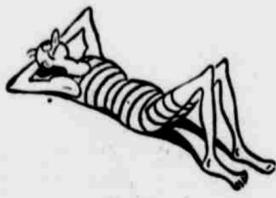
"And now," said I, "can you tell me if you have any such enemy as this young haired man, with the limping gait?"

"I know one man," he began; "but no—'tis impossible."

"I think," said I, "you had better be considering what to do."

The Day of Rest

By Maurice Kettner



giant'd to right and left. "If these twain intend 'my hurt—as, indeed, 'twould seem—they lose their labor; for this very night I ride from Oxford."

"And why is that?"

"I'll tell thee, Jack, tho' I deserve to be shot. I am bound with a letter from His Majesty to the Army of the West, where I have friends, for my father's sake—Sir Deakin Killigrew of Gleys in Cornwall. 'Tis a sweet country, they say, tho' I have never seen it."

"Not your father's country?"

"Why, no—for he married a Frenchwoman, Jack, God rest her dear soul!"

"He lifted his hat—and settled in that country, near Morlaix, in Brittany, among my mother's kin; my grandfather refusing to see or speak with him for wedding a poor woman without his consent. And in France I was born and bred, and came to England two years ago; and this last July the old curmudgeon died. So that my father, who was an only son, is even now in England returning to his estates; and with him my only sister Della. I shall meet them on the way. To think of it!" (and I declared the tears sprang to the shoulder blades; and with a yell of pain he spun around and came toward me, his point glittering in a way that turn'd me cold.)

"I gave back a pace, snatch'd up a chair and with my back against the door, wait'd his charge. His wide-terrified eyes were fixed on the far end of the room, where Anthony and the brute Settle stood, with a shattered chair between them, their swords, were crossed in fierce, and grating together as each sought occasion for a lunge, which might have been fair enough; but for a dog-faced trooper in a frowzy black periwig, who, as I entered, was gathering a handful of coins from under the fallen table, and now ran across, sword in hand, to the Captain's aid."

Now, I carried no sword; but seizing the tankard from the pot-boy's hand, I hur'd it at the dog-faced trooper. He blazed, and with a yell of pain he spun around and came toward me, his point glittering in a way that turn'd me cold.

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"'Twas in this posture that, flinging a glance across the room, I saw the Captain's sword describe a small circle of light, and next moment, with a blinding flash, he was rushing toward me, and stagger'd against the wall, pin'd through the chest to the wainscoting. "Out with the lights, Dick!" hawl'd Settle, tugging out his point. "Quick, fool—the window!"

Dick, with a back sweep of his hand, sent the candles flying off the shelf; and, save for the flicker of the hearth, we were in darkness. I felt, rather than saw, his rush toward me, leapt aside, and brought down my chair with a crash on his skull. He went down like a nine-pin, but scrambled up in a trice, and was running for the window. There was a shout below as the captain thrust the lattice open; another, and the two dark forms had clambered through the Corn Market as fast as legs could take me.

"Here, Jack, here!" pocket it quick!"

'Twas a letter, and as my fingers closed on it they met a damp smear, the meaning of which was but too plain.

"Button it sharp—in thy breast; now feel for my sword."

I groped beside him, found the hilt, and held it up.

"So—'tis thine, Jack; and my mare, Molly, and the letter to take. Say to Della—Hark! they are on the stairs."

I had my foot on the bottom step,

With a shout, the door was flung wide, and on the threshold stood the Watch, their lanterns held high and shining in Anthony's face, and on the black stain where his doubt had been thrown open.

In numbers they were six or eight, led by a small, wry-necked man that held a long staff and wore a gilt chain over his furred collar.

"In the king's name, I arrest you all—so help me God! Now, what's the matter?"

"Sirs," said I, laying poor Anthony's head softly back, "you are too late; my friend it dead."

"Then, young man, thou must come along."

"The charge is homicidium, or manslaughter, with or without malice premeditated."

"Pack of fools!" I cried. "The guilty ones have escap'd these ten minutes. Now, stop me who dares!"

"I flew up Ship Street, and through the Turf, and doubled back up the High Street, sword in hand. The people I met were too far taken aback, as I suppose, to interfere. But a many must have join'd in the chase; for presently the street behind me was black with the clatter of footsteps and cries of 'a thief—a thief! Stop him!'"

A bright thought had struck me, and taking a free whiff, I set off again around the corner of Oriol College and down Merton Street toward Master Timothy Carter's house, my mother's cousin. This gentleman—was my town clerk to the Mayor and Corporation of Oxford—was also in a sense my guardian, holding in trust about £200 (which was also my inheritance), and spending the same jealously on my education.

To be short, ten o'clock was striking from St. Mary's spire when, with thirty guineas in my pocket (which was all the loose gold my uncle had), I walked forth from Master Carter's door and stepped briskly forward on my travels.

CHAPTER IV.

NOT till I was over the bridges and climbing the high square of the casement and dropp'd into the bowling-green below.

By this, I had made my way across the room, and found Anthony sunk against the wall, with his feet outstretched. There was something he held out toward me, groping for my hand and at the same time whispering in a thick choking voice:

"Here, Jack, here!" pocket it quick!"

'Twas a letter, and as my fingers closed on it they met a damp smear, the meaning of which was but too plain.

"Button it sharp—in thy breast; now feel for my sword."

I groped beside him, found the hilt, and held it up.

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THE REAL MAN

By FRANCIS LYNDE

A story of the rugged West—the hero a man from the East whose force of circumstances invested with a new personality bigger, stronger, more virile than the old.

BEGINS IN NEXT MONDAY'S EVENING WORLD

At once there was a clamor, all bidding I not breathe for my custom. So finishing my breakfast, I walked out with them to the lavender-yard, where I had my pick among the garden-lookers, and bought a pair of hand-made shoes, for five pounds, twelve shillings and a few shillings more than I could more honestly have done than the rest.

The day (I was drawing near noon as I started) was cold and clear, with a coating of rime over the fields, and my horse's feet rang cheerfully on the frozen roads. His nose was of the rosette, but, as I was on a cold ride, this suited me rather than not. Only it was galling to be told so, as had been my friend's pickpocket, and he set before a fire of dry sticks a little way back from the road.

"Hien, lightman, comrade—good day!" 'Tis a good world, so stop and dine."

I pulled up my gray. "Glad you find it so," I answered; "you had a high chance to compare it with the next, last night."

"Shut up, do a week in the next, I fear," he said with a twinkle; "but I owe thee something and here's a hedgehog that in five minutes will be back to thee."

While I tethered my horse I blew at the embers, wherein lay a good-sized ball of clay, baking. After a while he pulled the clay ball out of the fire, cracked it, and lo! there was a hedgehog cooked, the spikes sticking in the clay, and coming away with it. So he divided the flesh with his knife, and spread a slice of bread from his wallet I made very delicate eating; though I doubt if I enjoyed it as much as did my comrade, who swore over and over that the world was good, and as the wintry sun broke out, and the hot ashes warmed his knees, began to chatter at a great pace.

He broke off at the sound of wheels, and a coach with two postillions spun past us on the road.

I had just time to catch a glimpse of a figure huddled in the corner and a sweet, pretty girl with chestnut curls, seated beside it, as the coach, a heavy, broad-shouldered servant, riding on a stout gray, who flung us a sharp glance as he went by, and a sign of the world's distance turned again to look at me.

I was now bidding the old rascal good-by. But he offered to go with me as far as Hungerford, where we should turn to the right, and the rain coming down again, so that 'twas high time to seek an inn. We found quarters at the Horn, and sought the travellers' room and a fire to dry ourselves.

In this room, at the window, were two men who looked lazily up at our entrance. They were a plump, fat fellow, which was no other than race two snails up a pane of glass and wager which should prove the faster.

Drawing near, I myself was soon as clear as the air in watching the antics, when my companion drew my notice to a piece of writing on the window over which they were crawling like a couple of vermin, the light of the candle that must have been scratched with a diamond; and, to my surprise—for I had not guessed him a scholar—he read them out for my benefit. Thus he was clouded over and the rain coming down again, so that 'twas high time to seek an inn. We found quarters at the Horn, and sought the travellers' room and a fire to dry ourselves.

"That's my silly husband, I have him wrapped in oil and cotton. He got so sun-burned on the beach he can't put on his clothes."

"O people, the end of a perfect day."

CHAPTER V.

SECURE of pursuit, and full of delight in the mare's easy motion, I must have travelled a good six miles before the moon rose. In the frosty sky her rays sparkled fully, and by them I saw on the stables the silver dem-bear that I knew to be the crest of the Killigrews, having the fellow to it engraved on my sword hilt. So now I was certain 'twas Molly that I betrothed; and took occasion of the light to explore the holsters and saddle bag.

Poor Anthony's pistols were gone-fished, no doubt, by the captain; but you may guess my satisfaction when, on thrusting my hand deeper, I touched a heap of coins, and found them to be gold.

'Twas certainly a rare bargain I had driven with Capt. Settle. For the five or six gold pieces I scattered on the road I had won close on thirty guineas, as I counted in the moonlight; not to speak of this incomparable Molly.

The night was chill enough to numb my very bones after the heat of the late gallop; and, moreover, I knew nothing of the road, which at this hour was quite deserted. So that, coming at length to a tall hill with a black rock on the summit, I stood against the moon like a fish's fin. I was glad enough to note below it, and at some distance from the trees, a window brightly lit, and pushed forward in hope of entertainment.

The building was an inn, though a sorry one. Nor, save for the lighted windows, did it any grace of hospitality; but I climbed on, standing up, pressing my hat down on my head, struck a loud rat-tat on the door.

Curiously, it opened at once; and I saw a couple of men in the lighted passage.

"Hear the mare's heels on the road, Cap—Hillo! What in the fiend's name is this?"

Said I: "If you are he that keeps this house, I want two things of you—first, a civil tongue, and next a bed."

"Your sign says that you keep an inn."

"Aye—the 'Three Cups'; but little full."

He filled the fellow's voice so wretchedly that 'twas odds I would have remounted her Molls and ridden away but at this instant there floated down the stairs a young fellow, who, pushing his passage a sound that made me jump. 'Twas a girl's voice singing.

There was no doubt about it. The voice belonged to the young gentleman I had met at Hungerford. I turned sharply toward the landlord, and was met by another surprise.

The second man, that till now had stood well back in the shadow, was peering forward, and devouring Molly with his gaze. 'Twas hard to read his features, but then and there I would have wagered my life he was no other than Luke Settle's comrade, Black Dick.

The landlord was for slamming the door in my face, when the other caught him by the arm, and pulling him a little back, whispered a word or two. I guessed what this meant, but resolved not to draw back; and presently the landlord's voice began again, but with a stony and polite: "Have you too high a stomach to be estraw?"

"Why, no—perhaps better not," replied I.

"(To Be Continued.)"