THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER

Heaven guards all fools, they say; and truly I believe it, or I should never have succeeded in leading two hundred of the Duke of Cumberland's Dragoons into our camp at Congleton. This juncture was a critical one in our fortunes. Prince Charlie was marching hot and fast on London with two armies after him—Marshal Wade's to the north, Cumberland's troops not a half day's ride off on the east. Each day we looked to be overtaken or intercepted by one or other of the hostile armies, but each day passed without a battle; and all the while we were moving nearer and nearer to the capital. Until now we had been all eagerness to come to blows, because the Highlanders need that sort of food to keep their stomachs sweet, and they were already showing signs of great impatience, but now that our rash march had brought us so far south, our one aim was to push on to London, avoiding unnecessary conflict by the way, and reserving our energies to cope with such resistance as the capital might offer us. On the 1st day of December—a chill, raw day, I remember—our cavalry set off from Macclesfield in the early morning to march to Congleton; and while we were on the road the Prince commanded Lord Elcho, Archie MacGregor, myself and a few of our cavalry to reconnoitre in the direction of Newcastle-under-Lyne. The Duke of Cumberland, with his 10,000 men, was encamped somewhere in the neighborhood of that village, and his Highness wished to learn, not only their exact situation, but also whether the Duke were lying quiet in camp, or whether he were already up and on our track.

There was no sign of life about Newcastle-under-Lyne as we drew near, save the reek from the cottage chimneys—and, over beyond the houses, the lighter smoke which mounts from camp fires half extinguished. We drew rein awhile, watching the scene; and, as we waited, there came a sudden rattle of musketry from far away on our left, and after that a silence, and then a second discharge of firing-pieces. At a loss to understand the cause of this, yet disposed to keep on our way until we had gained information of some sort, we made forward warily. We passed through the village, however, without incident of any sort—except that down in the hollow we came upon a trim-built corn-mill, at the door of which a young girl stood—the miller's daughter, as we guessed—and showed us so tempting a face, all milk and roses with the dew on them, that Archie needs must throw her some daft speech or other in going by.

Leaving Newcastle behind us, then, we viewed the place where the Duke's forces had clearly lain last night, and began to speculate as to his motive in striking camp. The trampled lane of slush that lay between the meadows and the highroad—made by the horsehoofs and the wheels of gun carriages—led into the highway between Newcastle and Litchfield, and it was plain that the whole body had retreated upon the last-named village. Another matter there was, too, which puzzled us, for a second trampled path, no wider than might accommodate two horsemen riding abreast, diverged at right angles from the wider track and led, so far as we could trace it, straight over the northward spur of hill.

"Had we met him marching hard toward Congleton or Macclesfield, I could have understood," said Lord Elcho to me, as he stood and looked up and down the road.

"It's my scythe blades that he fears," laughed Archie MacGregor, who was still vastly proud of the weapon he had fathered.

I was about to tell him that we were entirely convinced of the merits of his scythes, without hearing more of them, when my eye was caught by some movement in the hedge in front of me. We had found reason lately to be jealous of all skulking figures, and I watched the hedge narrowly.

"What is it, Mr. Anstruther?" asked Lord Elcho.

By this time I could distinguish the upper half of a face and two bright eyes peering through the thick network of boughs and twigs. "It is a fox, my lord, I think," I answered, and set my horse at the hedge.

It was a hard leap, taken so suddenly, but we crashed through the hedge-top somehow and landed squashily into wet land on the further side. The fellow whose face I had seen through the twigs was already on his feet and running hard across the field; but I was on him in a few yards, and had stopped and gripped him by the collar of his coat.

"Your business, sir?" I asked.

He made no answer, nor could I extort any speech from him by threats of rough usage; so I made him show my horse the way to the nearest gate, keeping a pistol cocked on him, and when we had regained the highroad I presented him to Lord Elcho with much ceremony.

Elcho looked hard at him. "Humph! A spy, sir, I take it?" he said, with blunt directness.

The man changed color; and, seeing him shrink from the word "spy" so daintily, I took a keener survey of him and judged that not long ago he had had pretensions to the rank of gentlemen. But still he did not open his mouth; nor could we get a single word from him until a rope had been fixed to the nearest bough and my delicate rascal's neck fitted snugly to the noose.

"Our time is precious," said Lord Elcho briefly. "Either you tell us all you know, or——," he shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you vouch for my life if I play—play traitor?" said the man; and again he shrank from the last word "traitor."

"I cannot. His Highness must be the judge of that; but this I promise—I will take you safely into camp and use my utmost persuasions for your life. Come, your answer."

He gave up the game then, and, once he had determined to accept the situation, he answered Elcho's questions in a clear, straightforward fashion. We had thought him a common spy only, and our glee may be imagined when we found that he was no other than Mr. Weir, the chief spy of the Duke of Cumberland, a gentleman by birth and closely intimate with all that concerned the plans of the English Army.

We learned, in fine, that the Duke's retreat to Litchfield was in pursuance of his resolve to wait until Marshal Wade joined him before giving battle to us; for in that case he would have two armies under him, and his attack could scarcely fail to be successful.

"This Duke of Cumberland must be a vera valiant chief," muttered MacGregor. "Has nae he gotten ten thousand under him as it is, and is he flichtered by five thousand Hieland laddies?"

"Captain MacGregor, you have less prudence than I am wont to look for in my countrymen," chided Lord Elcho. "Why furnish Mr. Weir with details of our numbers?"

Weir smiled, for the first time since I had captured him. "We know to a hair's-breadth your numbers and your plans," he said.

Elcho turned sharply on him. "How, sir?" he flashed.

"Well—perhaps it is no matter to boast about, but—I have been in and out among your men a score times since Carlisle."

Lord Elcho bit his lip, for he had prided himself upon the secrecy of all our movements; to cover his annoyance, he turned and pointed to the narrower of the two trampled paths that climbed the hillside on our right. "The whole army, it would seem, did not go on to Litchfield," he said. "A smaller force has been detached from the main column; what was its purpose, Mr. Weir?"

"Just this," he said surlily; "Sir Peter Talbot lives over yonder hills, a half-league away; and it came to the Duke's knowledge that Sir Peter was zealously arming his friends on the Pretender's behalf."

I tapped him smartly on the arm. "The Prince's, sir," I corrected.

"As you will," said he with a shrug. "Two hundred dragoons were despatched this morning to sack the house and bring Sir Peter and his friends as prisoners to the camp."

Lord Elcho glanced at me, and I at him. We understood now what was the meaning of the musketry that we had heard awhile since. "What can we do?" said he. "We are too few to ride to the rescue of this Sir Peter Talbot."

"Shall I gallop back to our army?" I put in eagerly. "The Prince, I think, would let me have a cavalry detachment."

"No, no! He could not spare them—and it would delay our march too much. It seems a pity, Mr. Anstruther; but there is nothing whatever to be done."

It did seem a pity, and more than a pity, that a loyal gentleman should be lying under arrest almost within musket-shot of us, and yet we could not move a step to help him. There would be a brief trial for Sir Peter Talbot by-and-by, and a short shrift at Cumberland's hand; and we, his fellow-Jacobites, were well aware of it. Was it the fact that we could do nothing?

As I asked myself the question, I glanced at my friend, MacGregor, to see if he had any light to throw upon the situation; and somehow I was struck by the curious likeness which he bore to Prince Charlie—not in face, indeed, but in shoulder width and poise of body.

"Aweel, laddie, and hae I anither face this morning fro' that which ye're awquaint wi'?" said Archie, catching my keen glance. "Maybe ye'll tell us what ye're thinking of the noo?"

"I was thinking," I answered slowly, "that if you hid your face, or if the light was overdim to show it plainly, there's many a man even in our own army might mistake you for the Prince."

"Hoots! Dinna tickle my vanity. Is that a' ye mean by yon fine rapt gaze o' yours?"

"I was thinking, too, that there's a heavy price upon the Prince's head, and that these 200 dragoons would go far on the chance of capturing him."

I was feeling my way dimly; I had a glimmering of my plan, but its details all escaped me, and I think I should have yielded to Elcho's impatient summons and have ridden quietly to camp with him, had Archie himself not given me the hint I needed.

"Dinna be hard on the chiel," he said, with a slow glance at Elcho. "I ken fine what ails him; he's looking over at Newcastle, ye'll mark, an' I'll wager a crown to a bawbee that his thocts are wi' yon miller's daughter we saw as we came by."

"Come, gentlemen, a truce to all this jesting," cried Elcho, gathering up his reins. "His Highness will be growing impatient for our return."

But my plan was ripening now. I, too, had remembered the miller's daughter, and wondered why I had not thought of her till now.

"Lord Elcho," I said, without waiting to see anything more clearly, "will you give leave of absence to MacGregor and myself till midnight?"

"Leave of absence?" he repeated. "We know your taste for long odds, Mr. Anstruther, but surely you do not mean to——"

"Indeed, but I do," I interrupted, laughing; "and if you see me back in camp at all, it will be with the best part of these ten-score dragoons."

"But what is your plan, sir? Two men against two hundred does not sound promising."

"Your pardon; but if I told you, you'd never credit its achievement. I have made witless requests before, my lord," I added, laughing still, "and it is the fashion nowadays to humour me."

"That is true, sir," said Elcho with a puzzled smile. "In fact, since we took Edinburgh, the Prince has almost given carte blanche to MacGregor and yourself; and if you're bent on it, I have no more to say. Captain MacGregor, do you wish to join him?"

"Where the chiel gangs, there maun I gang too, for fear he comes to harm," said Archie slowly.

"And can you spare four of the troopers who rode with us this morning?" I asked, as Elcho, still puzzled, was turning to bid us both farewell and wish us luck.

"Take them, sir; it is useless giving my consent to halves," growled Elcho, motioning half his guard to join us.

After I had asked him to inform the Prince of what was going forward, and to prepare our camp for a sudden bugle call to boot and saddle—all which he promised with an air that spoke little for his faith in our wild venture—Lord Elcho headed straight for Congleton, with the remainder of his guard and Weir, the spy. Archie and I were left standing in the middle of the road, while the four troopers waited at a little distance for their orders; and for awhile we looked gravely at each other in perfect silence.

"Aweel, ye ken best, laddie; but I'm thinking we wad look fine and naked if yon ten thousand English came marching back to Newcastle," said MacGregor presently.

"There's a mill, Archie, at the bottom of the village, and a big house inside it," I said. "I think you marked it as we passed through."

"I winna hearken to your gibes, lad. Mark it? And weel I micht, for there was as braw a lassie upon the doorstep as I've ever seen sin' I set foot i' this dour, waefu' England."

"Yes, there was a lass upon the doorstep," I answered softly; "and the miller's daughter is going to prove the mainstay of our plot. You'll follow me, Archie, if I tell the miller some queer facts about you?" I put in by-and-by.

"Tell him what you like, laddie—except that I hail fro' the Lowlands; and if ye tell him that I'll dirk ye, as sure as I'm a MacGregor."

Archie was ever tender on this point, for he had been bred in the Lowlands, and it was a sore affliction to him that even his speech played him false to his Highland birth.

But I had no thought, indeed, of wronging him so far, but meant to present him to the miller in quite another guise; and after sending the four troopers to get bite and sup at the village tavern, I beckoned MacGregor to follow me down the street in the opposite direction. Arrived at the house abutting on the mill we knocked at the street door, claimed audience of the master, and we were ushered forwith into the chamber, where he sat drinking a mug of old October. I hastened to him, a world of anxiety in my demeanor.

"Sir," said I, "you have strange company under your roof today."

"What say you, young man?" he answered, glancing from one to the other of us stolidly.

"My friend and I are in dire peril," I went on; "we asked in the village where lived the honest man in it, and were sent to you. Can you keep a secret, miller?"

"As well as most men."

"Ay, I would swear you could. Well, then, our need is urgent, and it is no time for mincing words. My friend here is"—I lowered my voice—"who, think ye?"

"Nay, how should I tell? By his petticoats, I warrant he's one of the Scots that are marching close by here, they say. Come, my masters, is it a jest ye play on me?"

"Yes, the jest of life and death," I answered grimly. "The Scotch are beaten, and their leader has sought flight with the miller of Newcastle—get to your feet and bow, man, for this is no less than Prince Charlie who has come to honor your poor roof."

The miller was a hard man to move, it seemed; yet even he got up from his chair as the name passed his lips. He stood regarding Archie attentively, then: "I had heard tell he was a handsome lad to look at," said he, with evident disappointment.

I laughed out of all moderation, so quaintly it was said, and so honestly. "It is plain speaking, that," I said; "and plain speaking leads us to expect plain dealing from you, miller."

"Ay, it was plain eneuch," muttered Archie ruefully.

"Well, sirs, what do you want of me?" asked our host.

"Just this. The troops are up and after the Prince here, and he must hide till nightfall. Will you give him shelter?"

The miller pondered and the miller frowned, and not for a full five minutes would he venture "yes" or "no." Then, "Ay, I'll do it," he said.

Seeing his mind was fixed, I thought that it would do no harm to carry the mummery a little further. "Think well," I urged him; "it is a hanging matter, as you know, if King George's troopers catch you at it."

"I've said my say. He can hide here if he will," said the miller stubbornly.

"Good. They said well, miller, when they told me you were passing honest."

"I will not forget your honesty, sir, when I come to my own again," put in MacGregor with such admirable mimicry of the Prince's manner—nay, of his very words—that I was fain to look out of the window for awhile and smile my fill.

When I next turned about I saw that a comely lass had stepped into the room, and that she stood regarding MacGregor and myself with interest and surprise. It was the maid we had seen standing at the street door earlier in the day, and I was struck for the second time with the freshness of her beauty and the modest way in which she wore it. Indeed, I began to be sorry that I had given MacGregor so fair a part to play in what was next to happen.

"This is your daughter, sir," I said, bowing first to the maid and then to the dusty miller. "I guessed as much, and I am glad that she has come, for his Highness here had never anything to fear from women."

The miller seemed in doubt as to the wisdom of such frankness, but MacGregor, taking his cue from me, insisted on her knowing all his secret; and the girl went white and pink by turns as she curtseyed prettily.

"Your Highness," I said, bowing low to Archie, "I must see to some matters that we know of, but I will be here by nightfal without fail."

MacGregor responded without a blush. "Be expeditious, sir," he answered loftily; "remember that even a prince has but the one life, nor is he one whit more willing to loose it than a common man."

He dropped his English speech as soon as we were alone together. "Laddie," he whispered, with a twang you could have buttered bannocks with, "I aye thocht ye had a bee i' your bonnet, and now I've nae doot at a' aboot the matter. De'll kens what this last devilry o'yours may mean."

I told him in a few words what I meant to do, and Archie grew thoughtful for awhile. Then he took me by the buttonhole and quizzed me with his keen grey eyes. "Man Anstruther, ye've a head on your shoulders!" he cried. "Gang your gait, laddie, and trust me to empty a measure or two, while I'm biding for ye, a' i' the Prince's easy fashion."

"Ay, but you've not the Prince's head for liquor, and I'd rather find you sober when I come back again," said I. "Well, then, you'll remember the lane that leads past the mill garden? Have your horse ready saddled underneath the window that overlooks the lane, and gallop when the signal comes."

"I ken fine," said Archie softly, fingering his dirk. "An' the wee bit lassie, Anstruther? Think ye now I should deal saft wi' her, just to make the foolery seem real?"

"If there's a lass in it," I said, going out of the street door, "Archie MacGregor will deal saft with her."

A quick ride brought me to the tavern at the far end of the village, where my troopers lay; and, after bidding them hold themselves in readiness to fulfill certain commands of mine, and after borrowing a trumpet from one of them, I set off at a gallop up the road. The sun was close on getting by this time, and a silver moon was brightening the first edge of nightfall; the roads, though heavy in places, were drying under a crisp north wind; the night seemed made for me and for my purpose. A mile's ride brought me to the spot where the narrow, tangled path, which we had noticed earlier in the day, led off at right angles from the main road; I followed this, and by-and-by came in sight of a high, turreted house perched upon the topmost of the slope, which I judged could be no other than Sir Peter Talbot's. Any doubts I may have felt upon the point were settled long before I reached the house itself; for there were troopers in the Hanoverian livery all up and down the grounds, and I had scarcely ridden through the outer gate when a loud "Who goes there?" came down the slope to me.

"A friend," I answered jauntily.

The sentry waited till I drew the rein at the gate, then asked me for the password. I carried the matter with a high hand, told him that I had left the rebel army too lately to be acquainted with the password, and said that I must see the officer in command without delay.

"You come here from the rebel army, and you have the face to own it?" he growled, staring at me in amazement.

"Well," I answered, "do you think I'm the first to exchange a bad penny for a good? I must see your captain, I tell you; take to him the tale I've given you, and say that I have certain information of the Prince's whereabouts."

He hesitated, glanced at me again, then called to a comrade near at hand and passed me forward under his escort to the house. The second trooper left me standing in the hall while he took my tale, and presently I was ushered into a dark, oak-panneled room. A well-favored man of five-and-thirty years or so sat writing at a table. The trooper who had brought me in stood close behind me, with pistol cocked; and for a quick moment I felt my heart beat foolishly as I realized how completely I had burned my bridges.

"Well," said the man at the table, looking up after a long silence. "You bring a strange story. Let me see if there is any bottom to it."

His tones, cold and clear-cut, braced my nerves afresh; it was as if I had taken a plunge into icy water.

"My story is brief, sir, and to the point," I said. "This morning I wore the White Cockade; and now, at nightfall, I am minded to wear the Black."

"You look over-boyish and well-standing for the part of turncoat," he said, with the same knife-edge to his voice. "Still, that is your affair, not mine. You know the movements of the Pretender, you say?"

"I do, and can tell them to you—though Mr. Weir cannot at this moment boast as much," I answered, looking steadily at him.

"Mr. Weir," he snapped. "How come you to know anything of Mr. Wier?"

"Because, sir, I rode out with Lord Elcho this morning to reconnoitre, and we trapped this Mr. Weir upon the road. It was he who told me you were here—and I little thought at the time that I should so soon be seeking your assistance."

Again he eyed me keenly; but my information as to Weir was patently so accurate, and my danger in coming here, for any other purpose than to play the traitor; so pressing, that I saw he was growing ripe to credit all I told him.

"And in what way do you seek my help?" he asked, cold as ever.

"The Prince was with Lord Elcho and myself this morning," I went on. "Ah, sir, you grow warmer on the sudden!"

"The Pretender? How near was he, and did he bring no guard?"

"Only the two of us; the rest of his guard he left in a little coppice, two miles from Newcastle, while he himself went on into the village."

The captain sprang to his feet. "Why make so long a tale of it?" he cried. "The Pretender in Newcastle, unguarded? Take me to him, sirrah——"

"Soft," I interrupted. "The Prince is slippery, and if we hurry in this matter he'll be through our fingers before we know. Sit down, sir, and I will tell you how we are to catch him."

For the life of me I could not help seeing the droll side of the situation. Here was I, a stripling and a traitor self-confessed, and yet I took the upper hand, and ordered this soldier of experience to seat himself and take the matter calmly. But then, you see, there were thirty thousand pounds on Charles' head, and I, who did not wish to gain them, had all the better of the argument, with one who was already dazzled by the prospect.

He seated himself at my suggestion, but fidgeted uneasily with the papers on the table. "What is his business in Newcastle?" he asked abruptly.

"What is his usual business in the intervals of marching?" I answered, with a careless shrug. "The miller of Newcastle has a daughter——"

"Ay, has he," broke in the captain, smiling slightly for the first time—"for I kissed her as we came through this morning."

"You kissed in good company, sir," I laughed; "the Prince, if I mistake not, is following your example at this moment." And then I scowled, and, "Curse his gallantry!" I flashed, as if the words slipped out before I knew.

Again the other smiled. "I begin to understand," he murmured. "It is jealousy, then, that brings you here today?"

"Yes, though I did not mean to own it. He has robbed me, I tell you; the girl was mine before he came, and he took her from me by a trick."

I regretted so to take away the character of the miller's daughter; but there seemed no help for it.

"You shall repay him," said the captain quietly. And then I heard him mutter, "The tale fits well with what we know of the Pretender. It is just what they are saying all through England—flutter a woman's gown before his eyes, and there'll be no army needed to take him in a trap."

The taunt stung me but I checked my impulse to defend the Prince. "Sir," I answered, "we will prove within the hour that he has followed once too often his passion for the sex."

The captain got to his feet again, and I could see that he was counting over the tale of those thirty thousand guineas.

"Your visit is well-timed, sir; come, will you ride with me to the miller's and help to make the capture sure?"

"You could not do well without me," I answered coolly, "since there are by-ways from the house that you know nothing of. Besides, I aim at vengeance, and that will not be satisfied unless I see him taken."

"True; I only aim at honor, and revenge is a more potent spur, they say."

"You only aim at honor, sir; there is no price upon the Prince's head," I put in with an irony that was not over-safe.

He only glanced at me, however, as if he found unsuspected depths in one whom he had rated lightly. "Will a score of men make it safe?" he asked.

"They will not. The Prince's guard, fifty strong, lie hidden as I told you, two miles from Newcastle. They have orders, to my positive knowledge, to creep nearer in toward nightfall, and it may well be that we stumble on them either at the mill or after we have captured him."

"How far away is the main body of the army?" said he, after a long pause.

"They lie at Leek tonight," I murmured, disliking more than I had thought possible the need to glance from the truth.

"At Leek! Our advices told us Congleton." He glanced sharply at me.

"Mr. Weir would doubtless have brought you tidings of our change of plan, had we not discourteously prevented him," I answered dryly. "How many men have you at command?"

"Two hundred."

"All mounted?"

"Yes."

"Then bring them all," I went on; "I tell you, there shall be no miscarriage in this matter. If we take too few, and meet the Prince's guard, and lose him, I'll—your pardon, sir. I had in mind to threaten you; and that would mean death, would it not, seeing what our positions are?"

"Your good faith is sure enough, at any rate, and that is all I care about," he said. "Besides, sir, d'ye think I'm one whit less eager than yourself? But take all my men I cannot, for Sir Peter Talbot is a prisoner worth the keeping."

"But Sir Peter is bound, I take it? And surely two armed troopers can see to one man's safety. Look you, sir, they're devils to fight, these fifty Highlanders of the Prince's, and we shall need all our force."

I had struck a true note there, and by his face I saw that he shared that dread of the Highlanders which more than once had palsied the good folk of England.

"You are right," he said; "I will take them, all but two."

My credit was established once for all, and the captain, in his keenness to secure the royal captive, detected no trace of my anxiety that Sir Peter should be left with a guard so slender; and, as I followed him out into the garden, I smiled to think that four of our own picked troops were already lying in ambush near at hand, waiting only until they heard the King's dragoons ride off into the night.

The officer called to his trumpeter; the boot-and-saddle call rang echoing up the hills and soon we were galloping hard toward the village. A half-mile from the miller's we called a halt and made forward cautiously; and as I rode at the left hand of the captain, I saw that he was vastly restless.

"We are all but there," I muttered. "Will you let me take the conduct of this matter, sir? I know every loophole of escape, for I studied them well before I left the Prince here earlier in the day."

"Ay, you shall have the conduct of it, and remember that we play for no light stakes. Dead or alive, the warrant ran, if you recall."

"Dead or alive," I answered, and knew that Archie MacGregor was willing to share with me that grim alternative.

Grace of our Lady, how that scene comes back to me! The dry road, with the north wind fleeting down it; the frosted hedgerows; the round, bright moon, and the little stars that hung like lanterns from the blue-black of the sky. And here was I, with 200 troopers of the Usurper behind me, leading them into as fair a trap as ever moon or stars or frosted landscape looked upon.

"Yonder is the mill," I said, pointing to a star of light that flickered out on the roadway. "Give me half the men, sir, and I will guard the lane that goes along the garden wall; do you make attack upon the front, and one way or the other we will have him safe. The Highlanders, I warrant, are nowhere within pistol range."

The captain, seeing how clearly I had planned it out, consented, and I took my men some score yards down the road, to where the lane came into it, and edged my horse so well across the narrow way that those behind me could see nothing of what chanced in that direction.

"Son! There is a saddled horse just the bend," I whispered—and it was the truth I spoke—"I hear it champing at the bit, and it is 10 to 1 that we on this side of the house will get the credit of the capture."

The men began to cock their pistols, but I was rough with them.

"Ye fools, d'ye want to spoil it all?" I snapped. "Put up your pistols, for he's more use to us alive than dead."

The men obeyed me without protest; and a moment later I heard the captain knocking loudly at the mill door. The angle of the house forbade my seeing anything that passed, but each word came crisp and clear enough through the frost-sharpened air.

"Open, in the King's name!" sounded the captain's voice.

There was no answer, and a sudden misgiving seized me. Archie was to have watched against our coming, and to have had all in readiness. Why did he delay?

"Open, I say. It is 'One, two, three!' and the door comes down if there's no answer."

Still all was quiet within the mill, and I grew feverish. I recalled how Archie had talked of "dealing saft" with the miller's bonnie daughter. Was he even now throwing all away for the sake of dalliance?

"One!" said the captain, grimly, "two! three!"

And then I heard a casement flung back so sharply that the glass fell down in fragments, and Archie's voice came round the corner of the mill.

"What would you, disturbing the peace of honest townsfolk?" he cried.

"We want one Charlie Stuart, rebel and Pretender," answered the captain. "To be brief, sir, we want you, for may I rot if you are any other than the Pretender. Come down to us, or we fire upon the instant."

"Sirs, I—I am not the Prince—what would you with me?" quavered Archie MacGregor.

I had never reckoned Archie at his proper worth. He spoke plain truth when he denied his royalty; yet his denial was so clumsy and so frightened that you could not have found a man in England to think it less than false.

"Time presses, and we'll waste none of it in foolery, if it please you," roared the captain. "Quick! Will you come or shall we fire?"

Archie's voice changed upon the sudden, and I knew that the frolic had begun in earnest. "Fire, ye havering loons!" he cried. "Hae ye no heard there's neither sword nor pistol can touch Charlie Stuart?"

"Fire," cried the captain, and I could hear that anger was putting all his judgment at fault.

There was the roar of firearms, a further shattering of glass, and down the wind a blue-white haze of smoke trailed lightly. This did not trouble me, for Archie MacGregor was not the man to draw an enemy's fire before he was ready to escape it. I edged my horse more squarely across the narrow lane-top, and pointed toward the mill.

"Have they shot him?" I cried. "Go to the bend, some of you, and see if help is needed at the front, while the rest of us keep watch upon the lane here."

Accustomed to obey, without using their wits over-much, they turned their eyes away from the lane, and some of them rode slowly toward the mill. But I, for my part, looked down into the miller's garden and saw a figure, in plaid and Highland bonnet, steal shadowy between the box-shrubs and the orchard trees. To my surprise, another figure followed—and, as I live, daft Archie halted at the very edge of peril to put an arm about the miller's daughter and to stoop his lips to hers. Not five yards from his, at the turning of the lane; I could hear his horse neigh fretfully; and when he showed not content with the one kiss embrace, but tarried for a dozen at the least, I cursed him by every dulcet oath I had acquired in camp and field.

My men had seen nothing as yet, for I blocked their view, and they were trusting altogether to my eyes; but from the mill there came a shouting and a tramp of feet, and I knew that our game was up if Archie lost a single moment more. The half of that moment, priceless as it was, he wasted on the miller's daughter, and then he leaped the hedge, and I drew breath again.

It was a nice opportunity for judgment, this. If I led my troopers forward too soon, Archie would have but an indifferent start of us; if too late, pursuit would be out of question, and Prince Charlie would never see those ten-score soldiers I had promised him. As I halted, knowing that MacGregor must be in the saddle and away, yet wishful to secure him a better advantage, the captain and a score or so of his fellows came running out into the garden, and so decided me.

"He has got the better of us," I cried, turning to my troopers. "In with your spurs, men, and we'll catch him if we have to follow till the dawn comes up."

I started forward at the gallop; they followed, and by-and-by I heard another band of men come thundering after us, and knew—as I had guessed it would be—that the captain was not minded to forego all credit in this enterprise. And, as we rode, I thanked His Majesty of Hanover for laying those thirty thousand pounds upon the Prince's head, since without such lucre I think the captain would have led one half of his men back to Sir Peter Talbot's and have left me to secure Prince Charlie's person.

The lane led us shortly into the main road to Congleton, and, two furlongs off at furthest, we saw MacGregor galloping like the wind. My faith! it was pretty; and, though I say it, we played this game as well as need be. Our horses, Archie's and mine, were less heavy in the build and less weighted down with accoutrements than our enemies; we could either of us have distanced them outright within a mile, had it been our interest. But it was not our interest; each time that the pursuit seemed like to lose its interest MacGregor slackened, and I spurred forward with a shout; and there was not one man among the troopers who thought of anything except the fever of the chase.

Ah, me! to live those few wild minutes once again. The two of us again ten score, and we the masters of them, if we could but keep their zest at fever point. The moonlit meadowlands of Staffordshire swirled past us down the wind; through Hanley village, Bursem, Tunston, we dug the rowels in, and roused the heavy-sleeping rustics from their bed. On till we gained the Cheshire flats, and the sparks flew up from off the frost-bound road like fire from stricken smithy-iron.

"We shall lose him; he will gain his army," the captain panted, riding to my left.

"We head for Congleton, and his army sleeps at Leek," I laughed. "See, see! He fails! We have him!"

I lifted myself in the stirrups and yelled till I was hoarse. MacGregor bided till we were all but on him, and a pistol bullet whispered in his ear in passing; then he plucked at the curb again, and again the stormy chase began.

But two miles now—a mile—and Archie's mare was swaying like a drunkard as she went.

I gathered the reins more tightly. I glanced at the captain, and the ten-score men behind us. And then I drove my spurs in with a will, and shouting "Follow, follow!" I gained on them, stride over stride, until I was level with MacGregor's staggering mare.

"Another half-mile if she dies for it," I panted, and snatched the bugle that was swaying at my back and set my lips to it.

Clear as a bell, and loud as a thunderclap amid the night the call to boot-and-saddle rang down the dizzy wind. And those behind saw how the matter lay at last, and Archie and I were galloping under a bullet-hail toward the roughly-wakened camp.

"She's done," gasped Archie suddenly, and slipped from the good mare's back and clutched at my stirrup.

And so we came into camp. The Highlanders, roused by my bugle-call and by the musketry, were up and running forward with bared blades; and only in the nick of time I jerked the password out and panted "Foes behind," and turned my over-ridden beast to meet the enemy.

We took them to a man. Their headlong pace had driven them almost on to the claymores of the Highlanders, and when they sought to turn, their horses, spent with the long ride, refused to move a footpace further.

"No slaughter; make them prisoners," a voice rang out.

It was the Prince's voice; and by-and-by, when the dragoons had been escorted with much laughter of the bagpipes into camp, His Highness came to where MacGregor and myself were standing—standing, and watching the sweat run off in rivers from each other's faces.

"That was a hazardous venture, Mr. Anstruther," he said.

"I've known but one equal to it for jollity, your Highness," I answered, still panting in my speech, "and that was when I kept the stair against the men of Kirtlebrae. But Captain MacGregor here should have a full half of the credit."

"Nae, nae," muttered Archie. "I did but kiss the miller's daughter a time or two."

The Prince was eyeing the pair of us very kindly. "The de'il fartherd both of you, I fancy," said he, smiling. "Mr. Ansruther, what request have you to make? Any you wish, so long as it be great enough."

"To go with you to London, sire, and set you on the throne," I answered.

But the Prince turned aside; and I thought the tears were in his eyes as I spoke of London and the crown. And well they might! But that does not concern these lightly-written memoirs, for we had not then begun the drear retreat from Derby.

I have been garrulous, i' faith. I crave your pardon. But that moonlit ride to Congreton has stirred my pulse all afresh, and they say the pen should keep such memoirs of the sword alive.—Hallewell Sutliffe in Cassell's Magazine.

TRICKS OF DESERTERS.

Devices of British Soldiers Who Tire of Army Life.

To desert from either the army or the navy is not the easiest thing in the world, and even when accomplished the culprit lives in daily fear of being recaptured and sentenced to a heavy term of imprisonment. Therefore, the devices employed by some deserters are as ingenious as they are exciting, although they cannot be said to be always crowned with success. For sheer audacity the case of an Irish soldier who deserted in a south coast town some years ago would be hard to beat. Just at that time a number of desertion had occurred in the neighborhood, and the authorities were therefore unusually sharp to prevent further offences of this nature. But the man in question was dissatisfied with soldiering, and having a number of friends in the town who were disposed to help him, and being possessed of an unusually large modicum of pluck, resolved to delay his return to civil life no longer.

One morning early he slipped out of barracks and made his way to a friend's house without being seen. Arriving there he shaved off his mustache, and donning a policeman's uniform, boldly promenaded the main streets of the town. He was, of course, missed in barracks, and knew that the surrounding country was being scoured in the hopes of finding him. On one occasion his sergeant came up to him and asked him if he had seen or heard anything of the missing man, and he of course replied that he had not, but he would keep his eyes open! For more than a fortnight he preserved his disguise without it being penetrated even by the police themselves, and he then calmly left the town when the hue and cry had subsided somewhat. Nevertheless, his enterprise came to naught, for he was arrested in trying to work his passage back to Ireland.

Scarcely less audacious was the ruse employed by another dissatisfied son of Mars, and in this case, likewise, it proved futile. He happened to know that a certain publican in the town was in anything but affluent circumstances, for he visited the house regularly, and from remarks dropped at odd times discovered that the publican was heavily in debt to a Scotch spirit merchant. One morning, as soon as the publican opened his doors, the soldier arrived, after having first disguised himself with a beard and wig and donned civilian attire.

With him came a friend, who agreed to act as a representative of the law, and he promptly told the astonished publican that he had orders to leave a man in possession unless the sum owing to the Scotch spirit merchant was paid to him there and then. The publican, of course, could not pay, so the deserter was quartered upon him and lived in his house and at his expense for more than a week before the deception was discovered. Perhaps the most successful deserter—for a time—was William Conrad. Through one of his comrades he heard of a man whose son had gone to Australia gold mining, and had apparently disappeared, for nothing more had been heard of him, though the parent still believed he would see him again. Conrad therefore hit upon the ingenious idea of leaving the army by stealth, and, going to the man, informing him that he was the missing son. As his knowledge of Australia was considerable, he lost no time in putting his plan into execution, and the parent, believing in him despite the supposed alteration in his appearance, provided him with a home and money galore, a commodity he confessed he lacked. But, unfortunately for him, at the end of eighteen months the real son turned up, and what followed can better be imagined than described.—The Regiment.

ENMITY IN MEXICO.

A Leading Journal Deprecates Slurs Uttered Against Americans.

The "Tiempo" has the temper of a scorpion. Sufficient that a "Yankee Senator" arrives here, and is treated with courtesy by the Chamber of Deputies, for our ancient and ultra-clerical contemporary to see visions of the absorption of Mexico, and the downfall of Latin-America. All this is very tiresome, and, besides, it should be wounding to the pride of self-respecting Mexicans. There is a class of papers here which sees everything "American" through distorted glasses. One would think that the people and press of the United States had but one idea, one subject for daily thought and nightly meditation, and that the destruction of Mexican nationality. It is a ridiculous and unpleasing attitude and evinces a jealous, provincial, and contemptible frame of mind. Sensible people here, and journals which look out on the world with clear and impartial vision, are not afflicted with Yankeephobia.

They see prominent Mexicans going to the United States and being received with proper courtesies; an example of recent date is ex-Minister Baranda who, though out of office, has, in his travels in the United States, been treated with distinguished consideration. Mexican surgeons of fame, great Mexican prelates, even young artists, have been warmly welcomed in the best circles of American society. At Buffalo, the Mexican military contingent has been most cordially received and the press has accorded it merited praise. Everywhere among the educated and upper-class people of the United States the citizens of this country are regarded with favor.

One grows tired of seeing, in the reactionary press of this city, continual allusions to "Yankee barbarians," "insolent Yankees," etc. The American papers do not so refer to Mexicans.

To our thinking this continual abuse of Americans shows weakness, provincial jealousy, and an entire lack of national self-respect. Perhaps, however, this use of low and insulting epithets is for the edification of the chronic mossbacks, the more ignorant sort of untraveled, and half-educated people who, everywhere, in all lands, demand that their prejudices be consulted and their hatred of culture and enlightenment nourished.

Looking about in this city we see that Americans are popular as employers, that ambitious young men seek to associate themselves with them in business, and that American ways, fashions, etc., are imitated. This means a good deal more than the pin-prickings of the medieval and radical press. The "insolent Yankee" is law abiding, pays his taxes, respects the Government of the country, rejoices in the evidences of national prosperity, and, when occasion demands, defends Mexico against unjust criticism.

If the newspapers of the United States occupied their space with petty, miserable, and unjust attacks on the Mexican people, we should fear that intellectual degeneracy had begun to afflict Americans. We had hoped to see a gradual dying out of this persistent abuse of Americans, but provincial prejudice, envy, and rancor thrive and are industriously cultivated by newspaper writers whose minds are capable of being placed by dozens, on the point of a needle.

We should be ashamed to retaliate in kind; we have the sincerest desire to see Mexico take her rightful place among the great busy and advancing nations of the earth. Every triumph, material, intellectual, or otherwise of her sons we rejoice in. That her national credit has been restored by wise statesmanship gives us pleasure, and when we look about at the evidences of Mexican progress we feel that the majority of the Mexican people are not lingering in the ruts of an impossible fanaticism, or reposing in the lugubrious caves where the bats and obscene birds of bigotry and reaction find their congenial home. That Mexican statesmen, with all the inertia of the inheritors of colonial ideas to combat, have accomplished such marvels fills us with astonishment. To have overcome this apathy, and successfully to have carried forward vast plans for modernizing the country in the face of a belated bigotry, is indeed a wonderful triumph. This is a great country and it is advancing daily, despite all the protests of the reactionaries.—Mexican Herald.

CURRENT HUMOR

An Eye to Business.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)

Mrs. Brown—Will this bottle hold a quarter's worth of hair tonic?

Druggist—Oh, yes, Mrs. Brown; I can make it hold 50 cents' worth if you say so.

Good Evidence.

(From the London Fun.)

Nervous Lady Passenger (to deck hand)—Have you ever seen any worse weather than this, Mister Sailor?

Deck Hand—Take a word from an old salt, mum; the weather's never very bad while there's any females on deck a-makin' henquiries about it.

Wasted.

(From Judge.)

Clubberly—I wanted to play a trick on Fiddleback and gave him one of the worst cigars I ever smoked.

Castleton—Did you succeed?

Clubberly—No. He had smoked your cigars before.

So Sweet of Her.

(From the London Punch.)

Mrs. Chatterleigh—Fancy, dear, at the Browns last night they were all saying how glad they were to hear that you were at last engaged. Of course, I didn't believe the report, dear, and said I wondered anyone could be so stupid as to imagine anything so absurd!

Another Mouth to Feed.

(From the Detroit Free Press.)

"I'se just got ter have mo' wages, missy."

"But, Matilda, we are paying you $18 a month now."

"I'se aware ob dat, missy, but I'se gwine ter be married."

Rough on a Thespian Star.

(From the Glasgow Evening Times.)

Manager (to new actor)—Your performance of Hamlet is the very worst I've ever seen. If there had been any money in the house I should have been bound in honor to return it at the doors. As it is, several friends have sent in and peremptorily demanded that their names should be removed from the free list.

In Baseball Phrase.

(From the Denver Times.)

"Mommer," said the languid young lady who reclined on the parlor sofa, "do you think it is wrong for a girl to throw herself at a man?"

Mommer replied: "Not if he is a good catch, dear."

Has Fangs Somewhere.

(From the Philadelphia Record.)

Nell—It's ridiculous for her to behave in that uppish fashion to me. Why, she hasn't cut her wisdom teeth yet.

Belle—Perhaps not, but the fact remains that she has cut you.

In a Law School.

(From the Richmond Dispatch.)

Professor—What is generally understood by the phrase "an action at law?"

Student—An action at law is generally understood to mean a condition precedent to positive inaction.

Uncle 'Rastus' Ideal.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)

"So you still long for the good old days down South, do you, Uncle 'Rastus?"

"Yes, sah. Life was one grand sweet 'tater in dem ole days."

The Real Frauds.

(From the Chicago News.)

Mrs. Stubb—John, I see something about the "pension frauds." Can you explain what they are?

Mr. Stubb—No, Maria; but I can give you the cards of a few "shyster" attorneys. They are the real "pension frauds."

A Bad Break.

(From the Indianapolis Sun.)

"What's the matter with Rod and Miss Culpepper?"

"They're mad, I believe. You know Rod is a hunting enthusiast, and he got in a dreamy mood the other night and asked Miss Culpepper if she used smokeless powder."

A Scheme.

(From the Ohio State Journal.)

Swiggers—That man Killtime is a shrewd fellow!

Swaggers—Why?

Swiggers—He gave a lawn mowing party yesterday and had the guests cut all the grass.

Costs Too Much for Most People.

(From Judge.)

Crawford—How do you figure that the Exposition at Buffalo is better than the one they had at Paris?

Crabshaw—It doesn't cost so much to get there.

Chloroform Her.

(From the New York Herald.)

When you start for the country don't leave your cat to starve to death or drive your stay-at-home neighbors to distraction.

Some Difference.

(From the London Punch.)

Thirty (?)—Did he say he knew me when I was a girl?

Sweet Twenty—Oh, no. He said he remembers you when he was a boy.

Cooler Than Kerosene.

(From the Chicago News.)

"They say Joe Dobbs is dreadfully penurious."

"Penurious? He tells me that he reads his evening paper now by a bottleful of lightning bugs."

Janus Faced Symptoms.

(From the Chicago Record-Herald.)

"Harry is so absent-minded! He went up to dress for a party once, and went to bed instead."

"H'm! that looks to me like a fine case of presence of mind."

Wisdom in the West.

(From the Atchison Globe.)

An Atchison woman counts her spoons before she permits her guests to leave the table.

Weather Predictions.

(From the Pittsburg Chronicle Telegraph.)

"It looks as though rain were coming up," said Mr. Bellefield early this morning, scanning the sky.

"Oh, never mind," added his wife. "It will come down by and by."

The Modern Duel.

(From the Sketch.)

Small Man—Yes, sir; he's a contemptible scoundrel, and I told him so.

Big Man—Did he knock you down?

Small Man—No; I told him—er—through the telephone.

Analytical Punishment.

(From the Indianapolis Press.)

The worst boy in school had played hookey, the teacher had given him twenty lashes with a hickory gad and sent him to stand in the corner.

"This, children," the teacher said, "is an object lesson in what some scientists call absent treatment."

Information.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)

Mrs. Ferguson—George, how do they read a man out of the party?

Mr. Ferguson—Well, I suppose they put his name in the index expurgatorius, and then let things take their course."

Swindled at the Dinner Table.

(From the Chicago News.)

Little Tommy—Mamma, that was good beef we had for dinner. Where did you get it?

Mamma—That wasn't beef, my son. It was roast pork.

Little Tommy—Then why didn't you tell me before? You know I don't like pork.

Reasonable Objections All Around.

(From the London Fun.)

Cousin Tom—So you are not going to marry him?

Eleanor—No.

Cousin Tom—Why not?

Eleanor—Well, papa objects to his fortune, mamma objects to his family, and I object to his character; and besides that, he has not asked me yet.

A Moving Tale.

(From the Philadelphia Press.)

"When I first settled here," said the Kansas man, "my nearest neighbor was twenty-five miles away, but now he's just across the road."

"The way you put it," remarked the Easterner, "that doesn't show anything. That may mean——"

"It shows, my friend, that cyclones are mighty powerful, that's all."

In a Flourishing Condition.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)

Old-Fashioned Pastor—You observe no falling off in spirituality in your congregation, I hope?

Popular Young Clergyman—I think our congregation has never been as active in church work as now. The ladies' ice cream socials are excellently attended, and our last rummage sale realized nearly $375 for the organ fund.

Suburban Weights.

(From the Boston Globe.)

"What are you carrying those bricks and old cans for?"

Man From the Suburbs—Well, I didn't happen to have any bundles tonight, but I never allow myself to get out of training!

A Wise Patient.

(From the Atlanta Constitution.)

One of these "healers" who was in Georgia some time ago was approached by a man with the rheumatism and a gold-headed cane.

"Drop the cane," said the healer, "and depart in peace!"

"Never!" exclaimed the man. "That cane cost me $12."

The Tourist's Excuse.

(From the Ohio State Journal.)

"What did Touriste go to Italy for?"

"To see the sun set."

Some Distinction in That.

(From the Detroit Free Press.)

She—Don't let my refusal of your proposal embitter you, Mr. Simpkins.

He—Oh, no; after all, it is something to have even been rejected by a girl who owns a $500 dog.

A Familiar Illustration.

(From the Pittsburg Bulletin.)

"Papa, what is a king?"

"A king, my child, is a person whose authority is practically unlimited, whose word is law, and whom everybody must obey."

"Papa, is mamma a king?"

For Shining.

(From the Detroit Free Press.)

Mr. Jacksing—Ye see dat pomperous-lookin' gen'lemun 'cross de street? Dat am Cuhnell Snowball, de riches' gen'lemun in Dahkville.

Mr. Johnsing—Shoh! you don't say! Whah'd he git dat money?

Mr. Jacksing—Manufacturing face powdah, sah. An' (confidentially) to tell de hones' troof, I inspec' dat de hull proposition of dat powdah am nuthin' moh dan powdahed chahcoal, sah.