The GREAT SHADOW

by A. Conan Doyle

AUTHOR of "THE ADVENTURES of SHERLOCK HOLMES"

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Writing long after the events described, Jack Calder, Scottish farmer, tells how, in his childhood, the fear of invasion by Napoleon, at that time complete master of Europe, had gripped the British nation. Following a false alarm that the French had landed, Jim Horscroft, the doctor's son, youth of fifteen, quarrels with his father over joining the army, and from that incident a lifelong friendship begins between the boys.

CHAPTER II.—When Jack is eighteen his father's brother dies and his daughter, Edie, seventeen years old, comes to live with her uncle. Attractive personally, intensely romantic, and seemingly feeling little sorrow for her father's death, the girl is something of a puzzle to the simple folk of the Calder home.

CHAPTER III.—Edie makes a plaything of Jack's affections, and though always somewhat in awe of her, a feeling of deep love for his cousin develops in the boy's heart. Edie reproaches him for staying at home in idleness while his country is at war. Stung by her words, he declares his intention of joining the army at once, but she persuades him to stay. He tells her he loves her and she apparently returns his affection.

CHAPTER IV.—Jim Horscroft returns from Edinburgh, where he is studying medicine. Jack tells his chum of his engagement to Edie, believing the girl is sincere. Some days later he witnesses an unmistakable display of affection between Edie and Jim and reproaches his friend. Jim tells him Edie has promised to marry him, she laughing at the idea of her engagement to Jack. The two seek the girl and she declares only fondness for Jack but love for Jim.

CHAPTER V.—Jack, though deeply hurt, accepts the situation. News of the downfall of Napoleon and the end of the war reach the country. Walking along the coast, Jim and Calder witness the landing of a stranger from a small boat. He is completely exhausted and in a dying condition. They revive him and against Jim's advice Jack takes him to the Calder home, where he remains as a guest. He gives his name as Bonaventure de Lapp and is evidently a man of distinction.

CHAPTER VI.

A Wandering Eagle.

My father seemed to be much of Jim Horscroft's opinion, for he was not over warm to this new guest, and looked him up and down with a very questioning eye. He set a dish of vinegared herrings before him, however, and I noticed that he looked more askance than ever when my companion ate nine of them, for two were always our portion. When at last he had finished, Bonaventure de Lapp's lids were drooping over his eyes, for I doubt not that he had been sleepless as well as foodless for these three days. It was but a poor room to which I led him, but he threw himself down upon the couch, wrapped his big blue cloak around him, and was asleep in an instant. He was a noisy high and strong snorer, and as my room was next to his, I had easy to remember that we had a stranger within our gates.

When I came down in the morning I found that he had been before me with me, for he was seated opposite my father at the window table in the kitchen, their heads almost touching, and a little roll of gold pieces between them. As I came in my father looked up at me, and I saw a light of joy in his eyes such as I had never seen before. He caught up the money with a clutch, and swept it into his

y good, mister," said he. The yours, and you pay always on the third of the month."

"Ah, and here is my first friend," cried De Lapp, holding out his hand to me with a smile which was kindly enough, and yet had that touch of patronage which a man uses when he smiles to his dog. "I am myself again now, thanks to my excellent supper and good night's rest. Ah, it is hunger that takes the courage from a man. That most, and cold next."

"Aye, that's right," said my father, "I've been out on the moors in a snowdrift for six-and-thirty hours, and I ken what it is like."

"I once saw three thousand men starve to death," remarked De Lapp putting out his hands to the fire. "Day by day they got thinner and more like apes, and they did come down to the edge of the pontoons where we did keep them, and they howled with rage and pain. The first few days their howls went over the whole city, but after a week our sentries on the bank could not hear them, so weak they had fallen."

"And they died?" I exclaimed.

"They held out a very long time. Austrian grenadiers they were, of the corps of Starowitz, fine, stout men as big as your friend of yesterday, but when the town fell there were but four hundred alive, and a man could lift them three at a time, as if they were little monkeys. It was a pity. Ah, my friend, you will do me the honor with madame and with mademoiselle."

It was my mother and Edie, who had come into the kitchen. He had not seen them the night before; but now it was all I could do to keep my face as I watched him, for, instead of our homely Scottish nod, he bent up his back like a louping trout, and slid his foot, and clapped his hand over his heart in the queerest way. My mother stared, for she thought he was making fun of her, but Cousin Edie fell into it in an instant, as though it had been a game, and away she went in a great courtesy, until I thought she would have had to give it up, and sit down right there in the middle of the kitchen floor. But no, she was up again as light as a piece of fluff, and we all drew up our stools and started on the scones and milk and porridge.

He had a wonderful way with women, that man. Now, if I were to do it, or Jim Horscroft, it would look as if we were playing the fool, and the girls would have laughed at us; but with him it seemed to go with his style of face and fashion of speech, so that one came at last to look for it. For when he spoke to my mother or to Cousin Edie—and he was never backward in speaking—it would always be with a bow and a look as if it would hardly be worth their while to listen to what he had to say; and when they answered he would put on a face as though every word they said was to be treasured up and remembered forever. Edie did not say much, but she kept shooting little glances at our visitor, and once or twice he looked very hard at her.

When he had gone to his room, after breakfast, my father pulled out eight golden pounds, and laid them on the table.

"What think ye of that, Martha?" said he.

"You've sold the two black tups after all?"

"No, but it's a month's pay for board and lodging from Jock's friend and as much to come every four weeks."

But my mother shook her head when she heard it. "Two pounds a week is overmuch," said she. "And it is not when the poor gentleman is in distress that we should put such a price on his bit of food."

"Why, woman, he's turned your head wi' his foreign trick of speech," cried my father.

"Aye, and it would be a good thing if Scottish men had a little more of that kindly way," she said, and that was the first time in all my life that I had ever heard her answer him back.

Our visitor came down soon, and asked me to come out with him. When we were in the sunshine he held out a little cross made of red stones, one of the bonniest things that ever I had set eyes upon.

"These are rubies," said he, "and I got it at Tudela, in Spain. I pray that you will take this as a memory of your exceeding kindness to me yesterday. It will fashion into a pin for your cravat."

I could but thank him for the present, which was of more value than anything I had ever owned in my life.

"I am off to the upper muir to count the lambs," said I. "Maybe you would care to come up with me and see something of the country?"

He hesitated for a moment, and then he shook his head.

"I have some letters," he said, "which I ought to write as soon as possible. I think that I will stay at quiet this morning and get them written."

All forenoon I was wandering over the links, and when I got back he looked as though he had been born and bred in the steading. He sat in the big wooden-armed single chair, with the black cat on his knee. His arms were out, and he held a skein of worsted from hand to hand, which my mother was busily rolling into a ball. Cousin Edie was sitting near, and I could see by her eyes that she had been crying.

"Hullo! Edie," said I; "what's the trouble?"

"Ah! mademoiselle, like all good and true women, has a soft heart," said he; "I didn't thought it would have moved her, or I should have been silent. I have been talking of the suffering of some troops of which I knew something, when they were crossing the Guadarama mountains in the winter of 1808. Ah, yes, it was very bad, for they were fine men and fine horses. It is strange to see men blown by the wind over the precipices, but the ground was so slippy, and there was nothing to which they could hold. So companies all linked arms, and they did better in that fashion; but one artilleryman's hand came off as I held it, for he had had the frost bite for three days."

I stood staring, with my mouth open.

"And the old grenadiers, too, who were not so active as they used to be, they could not keep up; and yet if they lingered the peasants would catch them and decimate them to the bare doors with their feet up and a fire under their heads, which was a pity for these fine old soldiers. So when they could go no farther it was interesting to see what they would do. For they would sit down and say their prayers, sitting on an old saddle, or their knapsacks, maybe, and then take off their boot and stocking, and lean their chin on the barrel of their musket. Then they would put their toe on the trigger, and pouf! it was all over, and there was no more marching for those fine old grenadiers. Oh! it was very rough work up there on the Guadarama mountains."

"And what army was this?" I asked.

"Oh! I have served in so many armies that I mix them up sometimes. Yes, I have seen much of war. But there is a man out yonder. Maybe he is the one who your father said would carry my letters to the post."

"Yes, he is farmer Whitehead's man. Shall I give them to him?"

"Well, he would be more careful of them if he had them from your hand." He took them from his pocket, and gave them over to me. I hurried out with them, and as I did so my eyes fell upon the address of the topmost one. It was written very large and clear.

"A.S.Majeste
"Le Roi du Suede
"Stockholm."

I did not know very much French, but I had enough to make that out. What sort of eagle was this which had flown into our humble nest?

CHAPTER VII.

The Corriemuir Peel Tower.

Well, it would weary me, and I am very sure that it would weary you also if I were to attempt to tell you how life went with us after this man came under our roof, or the way in which he gradually came to win the affections of everyone of us. With the women it was quick work enough, but soon he had thawed my father, too, which was no such easy matter, and had gained Jim Horscroft's good will as well as my own.

One of his first acts was to give my father the boat in which he had come, reserving only the right to have it back in case he should have need of it. The herring were down on the coast that autumn, and my uncle, before he died, had given us a fine set of nets, so the gift was worth many a pound to us. Sometimes De Lapp would go out in the boat alone, and I have seen him for a whole summer day rowing slowly along, and stopping every half-dozen strokes to throw over a stone at the end of a string. I could not think what he was doing until he told me of his own free will.

"I am fond of studying all that has to do with the military," said he, "and I never lose a chance. I was wondering if it would be a difficult matter for the commander of an army corps to throw his men ashore here."

"If the wind were not from the east," said I.

"Ah, quite so, if the wind were not from the east. Have you taken soundings here?"

"No."

"Your line-of-battleships would have to lie outside, but there is water enough for a forty-gun frigate right up within musket range. Cram your boats with trailleurs, deploy them behind these sand-hills, then back with the launches for more, and a stream of grape over their heads from the frigate. It could be done! It could be done!" His mustaches bristled out more like a cat's than ever, and I could see by the flash of his eyes that he was carried away by his dream.

"You forget that our soldiers would be upon the beach," said I indignantly.

"Ta, ta, ta!" he cried. "Of course, it takes two sides to make a battle. Let us see now! Let us work it out! What could you get together? Shall we say twenty—thirty thousand? A few regiments of good troops. The rest, pouf!—conscripts, bourgeois with arms, how do you call them—volunteers."

"Brave men!" I shouted.

"Oh yes, very brave men, but imbecile; ah, mon Dieu, it is incredible how imbecile they would be. Not they alone, I mean, but all young troops. War must be learned, my young friend, just the same as the farming of sheep."

"Pooh!" said I, not to be outcrowed by a foreigner. "If we had thirty thousand men on the line of the hill yonder you would come to be very glad that you had your boats behind you."

Sometimes, when he talked, I thought he was joking, and at other times it was not quite so easy to say. I well remember one evening that summer when he was sitting in the kitchen with my father, Jim, and me, after the women had gone to bed, he began about Scotland and its relation to England.

"You used to have your own king, and your own laws made at Edinburgh," said he; "does it not fill you with rage and despair when you think that it all comes to you from London now?"

Jim took his pipe out of his mouth. "It was we who put our king over the English, so if there's any rage it should have been over yonder," said he.

This was clearly news to the stranger, and it silenced him for the moment.

"Well, but your laws are made down there, and surely that is not good," he said at last.

"No; it would be well to have a parliament back in Edinburgh," said my father; "but I am kept so busy with the sheep that I have little enough time to think of such things."

"It is for fine young men like you two to think of it," said De Lapp. "When a country is injured it is to its young men that it looks to avenge it."

"Aye, the English take too much upon themselves sometimes," said Jim.

"Well, if there are many of that way of thinking about, why should we not form them into battalions and march them upon London?" cried De Lapp.

"That would be a rare little picnic," said I, laughing; "and who would lead us?"

He jumped up, bowing with his hand on his heart in his queer fashion. "If you would allow me to have the honor!" he cried and then, seeing that we were all laughing, he began to laugh also, but I am sure that there was really no thought of a joke in his mind.

I could never make out what his age could be, nor could Jim Horscroft either. Sometimes we thought that he was an eldish man that looked young, and at others that he was a youngish man who looked old. On the whole, we thought that he might be about forty or forty-five, though it was hard to see how he could have seen so much of life in the time. But one day we got talking of ages, and then he surprised us.

I had been saying that I was just twenty, and Jim said that he was twenty-seven.

"Then I am the most old of the three," said De Lapp.

We laughed at this, for by our reckoning he might almost have been our father.

"But not by so much," said he, arching his brows. "I was nine-and-twenty in December."

And it was this even more than his talk which made us understand what an extraordinary life it must have been that he had led. He saw our astonishment, and laughed at it.

"I have lived. I have lived," he cried. "I have spent my days and my nights. I led a company in a battle where five nations were engaged when I was but fourteen. I made a king turn pale at the words I whispered in his ear when I was twenty. I had a hand in remaking a kingdom and putting a fresh king upon a fresh throne the very year that I came of age. Mon Dieu! I have lived my life."

That was the most that I ever heard him confess of his past life, and he only shook his head and laughed when we tried to get something more out of him. There were times when we thought that he was but a clever impostor—for what could a man of such influence and talents be loitering here in Berwickshire for?—but one day there came an incident which showed us that he had, indeed, a history in the past.

You will remember that there was an old officer of the Peninsular war who lived no great way from us, the same who danced round the bonfire with his sister and the two maids. He had gone up to London on some business about his pension and his wound money and the choice of having some work given him, so that he did not come back until late in the autumn. One of the first days after his return he came down to see us, and there for the first time he clapped eyes on De Lapp. Never in my life did I look upon so astonished a face, and he stared at our friend for a long minute without so much as a word. De Lapp looked back at him equally hard, but there was no recognition in his eyes.

"I do not know who you are, sir," he said at last, "but you look at me as if you had seen me before."

"So I have," answered the major.

"Never to my knowledge."

"But I'll swear it!"

"Where, then?"

"At the village of Astorga, in the year '8."

De Lapp started, and stared again at our neighbor. "Mon Dieu! what a chance!" he cried; "and you were the English parliamentaire! I remember you very well indeed, sir. Let me have a whisper in your ear." He took him aside, and talked very earnestly with him in French for a quarter of an hour, gesticulating with his hands, and explaining something, while the major nodded his old grizzled head from time to time. At last they seemed to come to some agreement, and I heard the major say "parole d'honneur" several times, and afterwards "fortune de la guerre." But after that I always noticed that the major never used the same free fashion of speech that we did toward our lodger, but bowed when he addressed him, and treated him with a wonderful deal of respect.

Jim Horscroft was at home all that summer, but late in the autumn he went back to Edinburgh again for the winter session, and as he intended to work very hard, and get his degree next spring if he could, he said that he would bide up there for the Christmas. So there was a great leave-taking between him and Cousin Edie, and he was to put up his plate and to marry her as soon as he had the right to practice. I never knew a man love a woman more fondly than he did her, and she liked him well enough in a way, for indeed in the whole of Scotland she would not find a finer-looking man; but when it came to marriage I think she winced a little at the thought that all her wonderful dreams should end in nothing more than in being the wife of a country surgeon. I was never very sure at that time whether Edie cared for De Lapp or not. When Jim was at home they took little notice of each other. After he was gone they were thrown more together, which was natural enough, as he had taken up so much of her time before.

Well, the summer and the autumn and the best part of the winter passed away, and we were still all very happy together. We got well into the year 1815, and the great emperor was still eating his heart out at Elba, and all the ambassadors were wrangling together at Vienna as to what they should do with the lion's skin, now that they had so fairly hunted him down. We never thought that what all these high and mighty people were doing could have any bearing upon us, and as to war—why, everybody was agreed that the great shadow was lifted from us forever, and that, unless the allies quarreled among themselves there would not be a shot fired in Europe for another fifty years.

There was one incident, however, that stands out very clearly in my memory—I think that it must have happened about the February of this year—and I will tell it to you before I go any further.

You knew what the Border peel castles are like, I have no doubt. They were just square keeps, built every here and there along the line, so that the folk might have some place of protection against raiders and moss troopers. When Percy and his men were over the Marches, then the people would drive some of their cattle into the yard of the tower, shut up the big gate, and light a fire in the brazier at the top, which would be answered by all the other peel towers, until the lights would go twinkling up to the Lammermuir hills, and so carry the news on to the Pentlands and to Edinburgh. But now, of course, all these old keeps were warped and crumbling, and made fine nesting places for the wild birds.

One day I had been on a very long walk, away over to leave a message at the Laidlaw Armstrongs, who live two miles on this side of Ayton. About five o'clock, just before the sunset, I found myself on the brae path, with the gable end of West Inch peeping up in front of me, and the old peel tower lying on my left. And as I stared I suddenly saw the face of a man twinkle for a moment in one of the holes in the wall.

It was so queer that I was determined to come to the bottom of it; so, tired as I was, I turned my shoulder on home, and walked swiftly toward the tower. The grass stretches right up to the very base of the wall, and my feet made little noise until I reached the crumbling arch where the old gate used to be. I peeped through and there was Bonaventure de Lapp, standing inside the keep, and peeping out through the very hole at which I had seen his face. He was turned half away from me, and it was clear that he had not seen me at all, for he was staring with all his eyes over in the direction of West Inch. As I advanced my foot rattled the rubble that lay in the gateway, and he turned round with a start and faced me.

"Hullo!" said I, "what are you doing here?"

"I may ask you that," said he.

"I came up because I saw your face at the window."

"And I because, as you may well have observed, I have very much interest for all that has to do with the military, and of course castles are among them. You will excuse me for one moment, my dear Jack," and he stepped out suddenly through the hole in the wall, so as to be out of my sight.

But I was very much too curious to excuse him so easily. I shifted my ground swiftly, to see what it was that he was after. He was standing outside, and waving his hand frantically, as in a signal.

"What are you doing?" I cried, and then, running out to his side, I looked across the moors to see whom he was beckoning to.

"You go too far, sir," said he angrily; "I didn't thought you would have gone so far. A gentleman has the freedom to act as he choose, without your being the spy upon him. If we are to be friends, you must not interfere in my affairs."

"I don't like these secret doings," said I, "and my father would not like them, either."

"Your father can speak for himself, and there is no secret," said he curtly. "It is you, with your imaginings, that make a secret. Ta, ta, ta! I have no patience with such foolishness." And, without so much as a nod, he turned his back upon me and started walking swiftly to West Inch.

Well, I followed him, and in the worst of tempers, for I had a feeling that there was some mischief in the wind, and yet I could not for the life of me think what it all meant. What could there be to spy about in Berwickshire. And besides, Major Elliott knew all about him, and he would not show him such respect if there was anything amiss.

I had just got as far as this in my thoughts when I heard a cheery hail, and there was the major himself, coming down the hill from his house, with his big bulldog, Bounder, held in leash. This dog was a savage creature, and had caused more than one accident on the countryside, but the major was very fond of it, and would never go out without it, though he kept it tied with a good, thick thong of leather. Well, just as I was looking at the major, waiting for him to come up, he stumbled with his lame leg over a branch of gorse, and in recovering himself he let go his hold of the leash, and in an instant there was the beast of a dog flying down the hillside in my direction.

I did not like it, I can tell you, for there was neither stick nor stone about, and I knew that the brute was dangerous. As it came at me with bristling hair and its nose screwed back between its two red eyes, I cried out, "Bounder! Bounder!" at the pitch of my lungs. It had its effect, for the beast passed me with a snarl, and flew along the path on the traces of Bonaventure de Lapp.

He turned at the shouting, and seemed to take in the whole thing at a glance, but he strolled along as slowly as ever. My heart was in my mouth for him, for the dog had never seen him before, and I ran as fast as my feet would carry me to drag it away from him. But somehow, as it bounded up and saw the twittering finger and thumb which De Lapp held out behind him, its fury died suddenly away, and we saw it wagging its thumb of a tail and clawing at his knee.

"Your dog, then, major?" said he, as its owner came hobbling up. "Ah, it is a fine beast—a fine, pretty thing."

The major was blowing hard, for he had covered the ground nearly as fast as I had.

"I was afraid lest he might have hurt you," he panted.

"Ta, ta, ta!" cried De Lapp. "He is a pretty, gentle thing. I always love the dogs. But I am glad that I have met you, major, for there is this young gentleman, to whom I owe very much, who has begun to think that I am a spy. Is it not so, Jack?"

I was so taken aback by his words that I could not lay my tongue to an answer, but colored up and looked askance, like the awkward country lad that I was.

"You know me, major," said De Lapp; "and I am sure that you will tell him that this could not be."

"No, no, Jack! Certainly not! Certainly not!" cried the major.

"Thank you," said De Lapp. "You know me, and you do me justice. And yourself, I hope that you will soon have your regiment given you."

"I am well enough," answered the major; "but they will never give me a place unless there is war, and there will be no more war in my time."

"Oh! you think that?" said De Lapp, with a smile. "Well, nous verrons. We shall see, my friend!" He whisked off his hat, and turning briskly, he walked off in the direction of West Inch. The major stood looking after him with thoughtful eyes, and then asked me what it was that had me think that he was a spy. When I told him he said nothing, but he shook his head, and looked like a man who was ill at ease in his mind.

(Continued next week.)

The Misses Elna and Fern Froyd, whose popular Millinery establishment helps to keep the ladies of Cedar looking their best, have just returned from Salt Lake City where they have been selecting their fall and winter stock of hats.

MICKIE SAYS: