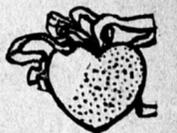


TRUXTON KING

A Story of Graustark

BY GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

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PEOPLE'S PULPIT

The Courier opens its columns for the discussion of topics of greatest import to the public weal. Communications of 250 words or thereabouts will be printed in this column. All communications should be typewritten or in plain hand on one side of the paper only.

THRESHING OVER OLD STRAW.

Editor Ottumwa Courier:

Our new contributor, "L. B. M." does not say much that has not been said by his yokefellows; but some of his theology needs correction. The statement that it is an "admitted fact that the decalogue, including the Sabbath, was given at the beginning, and kept by the patriarchs and others the first four thousand years," is not a fact at all; but a plain contradiction of scripture; see Deut. 5:3, Neh. 9:13, 14, Gal. 3:17.

The excuse for having fire on the Sabbath; that "was a part of Moses' law," or "their civil law," will not bear the light of scripture, for in Ex. 35:1, 3 we read: "These are the words which the Lord hath commanded.—Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day."

BEING A PRESIDENT.

This thing of being president of a great nation has its ups and downs. The other day the president was in St. Louis at a time when two baseball games were in progress. He couldn't go out and root for one of the teams, as he would like to have done, being a baseball fan, but he had to leave one game just when it was getting good and put in his appearance at the other and then leave that before it was over to fill an eating or an oratorical or a gastronomic engagement.

WASTE AND GOLD TO BLAME.

A special commission appointed by the governor of Massachusetts to investigate and report on the cost of living problem has made its report. In summing up its findings the commission held the increased cost to be due:

1. "To the increase in the gold supply, with a consequent reduction in the purchasing power of money."
2. "To extravagance and waste, and the increasing burden of poverty, disease, accident and crime."
3. "The commission reported that it found no evidence to warrant the conclusion that the trusts, the tariff or labor unions were active factors in increasing prices. The report covers 700 printed pages and shows the result of an exhaustive study of the subject. The conditions regarding the meat supply and the causes of the advance of western ranges; 4—sharp advance in the price of corn; 5—increased cost of farm lands. The report states:

"When all the influences are taken into account the wonder is not that meat prices are so high, but that they have not risen higher. It is not necessary, in order to read the meaning of this phenomenon to gaze into any man's nest of combination, conspiracy or manipulation. The explanation lies ready at hand in the multiplicity of natural and economic factors that have all combined to increase the cost of producing and distributing the meat supply. It is evident, furthermore, that the main causes of the present high prices must continue in the future to operate to advance the cost of meat to the consumer in ever greater degree."

The causes of the advance are summarized as follows:

1. The primary cause of the world-wide advance of prices since 1897 has been the increase of the gold supply, which has reduced the purchasing power of money and brought about a corresponding increase of values measured in money in all the leading commercial states, and at least in the United States has served as the basis for a vast extension of credit.
2. The advance of prices in the United States has been accelerated greatly by the enormous waste of income, through uneconomic expenditure for war and national armament, and through multiple forms of extravagance, both public and private, and of wastage, both individual and social.
3. The increasing burden of disease, accident, crime and pauperism imposed upon society, and the loss through expenditure on a rising scale for luxuries, and through wasteful domestic methods are potent factors contribut-

ing to the advance of the cost of living. 3. The advance of prices has been further promoted by a complexity of causes operating on the side of supply to reduce the volume and increase the expenses of production, and on the side of demand, to extend and diversify the consumption of commodities. The main factors in restricting supply and enhancing the cost of commodities have been the drain of population from the land, which has decreased the proportion of persons engaged in producing the food supply; the exhaustion of natural resources, which has resulted in increased expenses of production and distribution, especially the latter.

The chief influences on the side of demand which have worked parallel to the forces affecting supply, have been the growing concentration of population in great cities, which has increased the proportion of non-producing food consumers; the general advance of the standard of living, which has enlarged the requirements on the part of individuals, consumers of all classes; and the national habit of extravagance, which has further extended and diversified to an abnormal degree the demand for comforts and luxuries created by that advance.

4. With regard to the tariff, the trusts and the unions, which have been declared to be either primary or contributory causes of the increase of the cost of living, the commission finds that none of these factors can be regarded as a direct and active cause of the recent general advance of prices.

5. The threatened suspension of the Morrell packing plant has been averted. The city council last night by unanimous agreement voted to petition the board of supervisors to reduce the assessment of the Morrell plant from \$675,000 to \$450,000. The action was taken upon the urgent pleas of the employees of the plant who were to have been laid off for an indefinite period by the suspension of the plant today, and the action of the business interests of the city in rallying through the Commercial association to bring about an amicable adjustment of the taxation difficulty that would insure the continued operation of this big institution. Mr. Foster in an interview this morning stated that the plant will continue in operation as if no misunderstanding had arisen. Although this matter had its very serious phase as it was brought before the people, benefit will be derived from it for the reason that it resulted in a basis being reached for handling similar questions in the future. A committee of five from the city council was appointed at the meeting last night to work in conjunction with a similar committee from the Commercial association in outlining plans for future dealings with manufacturing institutions.

It is generally agreed that taxation is a matter that requires experience and counsel, the counsel that comes from knowledge of the problems the manufacturer meets in competition with other institutions. It is necessary to arrive at a basis that will insure a square deal to the home manufacturer in order that he may go into competition on equal terms. The joint committee of the city council and Commercial association has the widest field for co-operation and the more hearty this co-operation between the city authorities and the business interests of the city, the greater the benefits that will be derived by the community.

Neither does it mention buying and selling, and would you think of doing that on Saturday? You had just as well, so, come now, own up that you "often in one point and are therefore guilty of all;" for, "jot and tittle" still means jot and tittle. Again you say, "Christ came as a teacher of God, not of a new doctrine of His own." If certainly was a new doctrine when He said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." (John. 3:3.) A doctrine which seems as new and difficult to would be law teachers today as it was to Nicodemus.

You also say, "Christ did the Father's will by keeping the law." But that never would have saved a sinner. It is only half the truth. When facing death He prayed, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done." (Mat. 26:42.) Notwithstanding His holy life, Heaven would have been tenanted had He not "redeemed us from the curse of the law," (Gal. 3:13) by His death on the cross. But by that death He became the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom. 10:4.) Nay, friend, it is still true that "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." (Gal. 3:10.)

J. C. Pearson, Eldon, Iowa.

Mother's Day.

A prize was once offered by a leading metropolitan paper for the three most inspiring words in the English language. It was awarded to the words, "Mother," "Home," and "Heaven." Surely each word awakens a responsive chord in every human heart, and it seems fitting that the first place should be given to "mother," through whose influence the other two are often made attainable. The second Sunday in May has been set apart as Mother's Day—the one day in the year when special honor shall be given to the best mother who ever lived—your own mother. It is honored this day to the exclusion of the others, but that such contemplation of her love may prepare the heart for fuller and more thoughtful expression of it the remaining three hundred and sixty-four days of the year. It seems especially fitting that this day should be observed in our churches, our Y. M. C. A. and our Y. W. C. A. So far as is in the thought of Mother's Day originated in the loyal heart of Miss Anna Jarvis of Philadelphia in connection with a desire to commemorate her own mother's home-going. This was in 1906. In two years the idea spread over North America and through other lands. The second Sunday in May was proposed as Mother's day, when universal motherhood should be honored everywhere and the wearing of a white blossom be a token of love and loyalty to the living and of perpetual remembrance of those called higher. Let individuals who are blessed with their good mother near them show their appreciation by some deed of kindness. If away from home, write her a love letter, send a telegram, call her over the long distance telephone or send her a special delivery letter. Religious organizations are asked to have special services on May 8th—Mother's day.—M.

A JUDICIAL CANDIDATE.

Keosauqua Republican. — Attorney W. A. Work of Ottumwa, who formerly resided at Keosauqua and is well known in this county, was in town last week looking after the judgeship for which office he will be a candidate. Mr. Work is a good lawyer and will make a strong race for the nomination. It is generally conceded that one of the judges of this district should be a resident of Ottumwa, where court is held almost continuously. The other Ottumwa candidates for the honor on the Republican ticket, are Attorneys Enoch and Hunter.

FARMINGTON.

Miss Etta Barton left Tuesday for a visit with relatives in Ft. Madison. Ell Wright returned Monday from a visit with his sister Mrs. John Coleman in Seattle. On Monday evening at the home of Mrs. Ida Moore, chapter O. P. E. O. was entertained by the following committee. Mrs. C. Hassler, Mrs. T. E. Coulter, Mrs. Ida Moore and Miss Linnie Corns. Each member was given a sheet of colored paper and requested to make a certain flower which proved to be a delightful feature of the evening. Refreshments consisting of pineapple sherbert, cake and coffee were served.

J. C. Schee, the newly appointed postmaster took charge of the office Tuesday afternoon. He has appointed H. O. Thero as his deputy and Miss Ethel Brewer as clerk.

(CHAPTER—XVIII—Continued.) "Good glory, man, tell me what it is! What has happened? The price—what of him?" cried Tullis, grasping King's arm in the clutch of a vise.

"He sends his love and recinds the order of exile," said King, smiling, then seriously: "Marlanx has taken the city. It was all a game, this getting rid of you. The prince and the others are besieged in the castle. Thank God, we got to you in time! Back here a couple of miles we came upon a small gang of robbers. We had a bit of shooting, and I regret to say, no one was bagged."

"Lorraine—where is she, King?" "Don't tremble like that, old man. She's safe enough in the castle. Oh, it was a fine game Marlanx had in his mind!"

While the troopers were making ready for the march Truxton King and Hobbs related their story to eager, horrified groups of officers.

Finally the battalion, augmented by the misguided company from the deserted railroad camps, moved swiftly into the defile, led by young Rabot. Truxton King rode beside the brother of the girl he loved, uttering words of cheer and encouragement.

"The Countess Ingomede—has anything been heard from her?" asked Tullis. He had been thinking of her for days and nights.

"Well, nothing definite," said King evasively.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RETURN.

FROM the highlands below the Monastery Captain Haas and his men were able to study the situation in the city. The impracticability of an assault on any one of the stubborn, well guarded gates was at once recognized. A force of 700 men, no matter how well trained or how determined, could not be expected to surmount walls that had often withstood the attack of as many thousands. The wisdom of delaying until a few thousand loyal though poorly armed countrymen could be brought into play against the city appealed at once to Prince Dantan and John Tullis.

Squads of men were sent without delay into the hills and valleys to call the panic stricken, wavering farmers into the fold. John Tullis headed the company that struck off into the well populated Ganlook district.

Marlanx, as if realizing the nature of the movement in the hills, began a furious assault on the gates leading to the castle. The watchers in the hills could see as well as hear the conflict that raged almost at their feet, so to speak.

The next morning Captain Haas announced to his followers that Marlanx had begun to shell the castle. Big guns in the fortress were hurling great shells over the city, dropping them in the park. On the other hand, Colonel Quinnox during the night had swung three Gatling guns to the top of the wall; they were stationed at intervals along the wall; commanding every point from which an assault might be expected.

That night recruits from the farms and villages began to straggle into the camp. They were armed with rifles, ordinary shotguns and unique blunderbusses, swords, staves and ag-lances. All were willing to die in the service of the little prince. By the close of the second day nearly 3,000 men were encamped above the city. Late that night John Tullis rode into camp at the head of a great company from the Ganlook province. He had retaken the town of Ganlook, seized the fortress and recruited the entire fighting strength of the neighborhood. More than that, he had unlimbered and conveyed to the provisional camp two of the big guns that stood above the gates at the fortress.

Marlanx trained two of his big guns on the camp in the hills. From the fortress he threw many futile shells toward their place of shelter. They did no damage; instead of death, they brought only laughter to the scornful camp. Under cover of night the two Ganlook cannons were planted in a position commanding the southeastern city gate. It was the plan of the new besiegers to bombard this gate, tearing it to pieces with shot.

The knowledge that Marlanx had no big guns except those stationed in the fortress was most consoling to Tullis and his friends. He could not destroy the castle gates with shells, except by purest chance. He could drop shells into the castle, but to hit a gate twenty feet wide? Never!

Truxton King was growing haggard from worry and loss of sleep. He could not understand the abominable, criminal procrastination. He was of a race that did things with a dash and on the spur of the moment. His soul sickened day by day. John Tullis, equally unhappy, but more philosophical, often found him seated upon a rock at the top of the ravine, an unlighted pipe in his fingers, his eyes intent upon the hazy castle.

"Cheer up, King. Our time will come," he was wont to say. Then came the night before the proposed assault on the gates. The guns were in position, and the cannonading was to begin at daybreak. Truxton was full of the bitterness of doubt and misgiving. Was she in love

with Vos Engo? Was the countess still progressing favorably under the fire of the enemy? Was his undoubted bravery having its effect upon the wavering susceptibilities of the distressed Lorraine?

The sound of a voice in sharp command attracted his attention. There was a bright moon, and Truxton could see other pickets hurrying to join the first. A few moments later several trespassers were escorted through the lines and taken directly to headquarters—a man and two women, King observed.

John Tullis was staring hard at the group approaching from the roadway. One woman walked ahead of her companions. Suddenly she sprang forward with a cry of amazement.

It was the Countess Ingomede. Her arrival created a sensation. In a moment she was in the center of an amazed circle of men. Tullis, after his first low, eager greeting at the edge of the fire circle, drew her near to the warmth giving flames. Prince Dantan and Captain Haas threw rugs and blankets in a great heap for her to sit upon. Every one was talking at once. The countess was smiling through her tears. "Make room for my maid and her father. They are colder and more fatigued than I," she said, lifting her tired, glorious eyes to John Tullis, who stood beside her.

"We have come from Balak. They suffered much that I might enjoy the slender comforts I was so ready to share with them."

"Thank God, you are here!" he said in low, intense tones. She could not mistake the fervor in his voice nor the glow in his eyes.

"I knew you were here, John. I am not going back to Count Marlanx. It is ended."

"I knew it would come, Ingomede. You will let me tell you how glad I am some day."

"Some day, when I am truly, wholly free from him, John. I know what you will say, and I think you know what I shall say in reply." Both understood and were exalted. No other word passed between them touching upon the thing that was uppermost in their minds.

Food was provided for the wayfarers, and Tullis' tent was made ready for the countess and her maid.

The countess' story was soon told. Sitting before the great fire, surrounded by eager listeners, she related her experiences.

She had been seized on the night of the ball as she started across her father's garden, and escape had become possible only through the aid of Joseph and the girl's father. Farmers' wives told them of the newly formed army and of its leaders. She determined to make her way to the camp of those who would destroy her husband, eager to give them any assistance that her own knowledge of Marlanx's plans might provide.

One bit of information she gave created no end of consternation among the male deliverers of the city. It had the effect of making them all the more resolute; the absolute necessity for immediately regaining control in the city was forced upon them. She told them that Count Marlanx had lately received word that the Grand Duke Paulus was likely to intervene before many days, acting on his own initiative, in the belief that he could force the government of Graustark to grant the railway privileges so much desired by his country. Marlanx realized that he would have to forestall the wily grand duke. If he were in absolute control of the Graustark government when the Russian appeared, he and he alone, would be in a position to deal with the situation.

"The grand duke may send a large force of men across the border at any time," said the countess in conclusion. "Count Marlanx is sure to make a decisive assault as soon as he hears that the movement has begun. He had hopes of starving them out, thus saving the castle from destruction, but as that seems unlikely his shells will soon begin to rain in earnest upon the dear old pile."

Truxton King was listening with wide open ears. As she finished this dreary prediction he silently arose to his feet and, without a word to any one, stalked off in the darkness. Tullis looked after him and shook his head sadly.

"I'll be happy on that fellow's account when daybreak comes and we are really at it," he said to Prince Dantan, who knew something of King's affliction.

But Truxton King was not there at daybreak. When he strode out of the camp that night he left it behind forever.

The unfortunate lack of means to communicate with the occupants of the castle had been the source of great distress to Captain Haas. If the defenders could be informed as to the exact hour of the assault from the outside they could do much toward its speedy success by making a fierce sortie from behind their own walls. A quick dash from the castle grounds would serve to draw Marlanx's attention in that direction, diminishing the force that he would send to check the onslaught at the gates.

Truxton King had all this in mind as he swung off down the mountain

road, having stolen past the sentries with comparative ease. The danger from Marlanx's scouts outside the city was not great; they had been scattered and beaten by Haas' recruiting parties. He stood in more danger from the men he would help, they who were the watchful defenders of the castle.

It must have been 2 o'clock when he crossed the king's highway, a mile or more above the northern gates, and struck down into the same thick undergrowth that had protected him and Hobbs on a memorable night long before.

At 3 o'clock a dripping figure threw up his hands obligingly and laughed with exultation when confronted by a startled guardsman inside the castle walls and not more than fifty yards from the water gate. He shouted a friendly cry, as he advanced toward the man, calling out his own name.

Ten minutes later he was standing in the presence of the haggard, nerve-racked Quinnox, pouring into his astonished ears the news of the coming attack. The colonel lost no time in routing out the sleeping guardsmen and reserves and in sending commands to those already on duty at the gates.

When the sun peeped over the lofty hills he saw inside the gates a restless, waiting company of dragoons ready for the command to ride forth.

Meantime King had crossed the grounds with Colonel Quinnox on the way to the castle. He was amazed, almost stupefied, by the devastation that already had been wrought. A dozen or more balls had crashed into the facade. Yawning fissures, gigantic holes, marked the path of the ugly messengers from Marlanx. Nearly all of the windows had been wrecked by riflemen who shot from the roofs of palaces in and about the avenue. Two of the smaller minarets were in ruins. A huge pillar in the lower balcony was gone. The terrace had been plowed up by a single ricocheting shell.

"Great God!" gasped King. "It is frightful!"

"They began bombarding yesterday afternoon. We were asked to surrender at 3 o'clock. Our reply brought the shells, Mr. King. It was terrible. After the first two or three shells we found places of shelter for the prince and his friends. They are in the stone tower beyond the castle. The most glorious courage is shown. Count Vos Engo guards the prince and the ladies of the household. Alas, it was hunger that we feared the most. Today we should have resorted to horse's flesh. There was no other way. We knew that relief would come some day. John Tullis was there. And now it is today! This shall be our day, thank God!"

Attendants sped to the tower, shouting the battle tidings. The prince came tumbling down the narrow iron stairs from his room above, shouting joyously to Truxton King. No man was ever so welcome. He was besieged with questions, handshakings and praises. Even the Duke of Perse, hobbling on crutches, had a kindly greeting for him. Tears streamed down the old man's cheeks when King told him of his daughter's safe arrival in the friendly camp.

But just now Truxton was staring at the narrow staircase. Vos Engo and Lorraine were descending slowly. The former was white and evidently very weak. He leaned on the girl for support.

Count Halfont offered the explanation. "Vos Engo was shot last week through the shoulder. He is too brave to give up, as you may see. It happened on the terrace. There was an unexpected fusillade from the house-tops. Eric placed himself between the marksmen and Miss Tullis. A bullet that might have killed her instantly struck him in the shoulder."

King never forgot the look in Lorraine's eyes as she came down the steps. Joy and anguish seemed to combine themselves in that long, intense look.

She gave him her hands. The look in her tired eyes went straight to his heart. Vos Engo drew back, his face set in a frown of displeasure.

"My brother?" she asked, without taking her gaze from his eyes.

"He is well. He will see you today," "And you, Truxton?" was her next question, low and quavering.

"Unharmful and unchanged, Lorraine," he said softly. "Tell me, did Vos Engo stand between you and the fire from the—"

"Yes, Truxton," she said, dropping her eyes as if in deep pain.

"And you have not—broken your promise to him?" "No; nor have I broken my promises to you."

"He is a brave man. I can't help saying it," said the American, deep lines suddenly appearing in his face. Swiftly he turned to Vos Engo, extending his hand. "My hand,

"FOR HAVE I BRO— sir, to a brave KEN MY PROMISE man?" TO YOU." Vos Engo stared at him for a moment and then turned away, ignoring the friendly hand. A hot flush mounted to Lorraine's brow.

Vos Engo's response was a short, bitter laugh.

CHAPTER XX. THE LAST STAND. SOON after 5 o'clock a man in the topmost window of the tower called down that the forces in the hills were moving in a compact body toward the ridges below the southern gates.

One hundred picked men were to be left inside the castle gates with Vos Engo, prepared to meet any flank movement that might be attempted. Three hundred mounted men were selected to make the dash down Castle avenue straight into the camp of the sharpshooters. It was the purpose of the house guards to wage a fierce and noisy conflict off the avenue and then retire to the castle as abruptly as they left it, to be ready for Marlanx should he decide to make a final desperate effort to seize their stronghold.

The dash of the 300 through the gates and down the avenue was the most spectacular experience in Truxton's life. He was up with Quinnox and General Braze, galloping well in front of the yelling troops. These mounted carabineers, riding as Bedouins, swept like thunder down the street, whirled into the broad, open arena beyond the duke's palace and were upon the surprised ruffians before they were fully awake to the situation.

They came tumbling out of barns and sheds, clutching their rifles in nerveless hands, aghast in the face of absolute destruction. The enemy, craven at the outset, threw down their guns and tried to escape through the alleys and side streets at the end of the common. Firing all the time, the attacking force rode them down as if they were so many dogs.

After ten or fifteen minutes of this desultory carnage it was reported that a large force of men were entering the avenue from Regengetz circus. Quinnox sent his chargers toward this great horde of foot soldiers, but they did not falter, as he had expected. On they swept, 2,000 or 3,000 of them. At their head rode five or six officers. The foremost was Count Marlanx.

Quinnox saw now that the Iron Count was determined to storm the gates and gave the command to retreat. Waving their rifles and shouting defiance over their shoulders, the dragoons drew up, wheeled and galloped toward the gates.

Scarcely were the massive portals closed and the great steel bars dropped into place by the men who attended them when a low, dull explosion shook the earth as if by volcanic force. Then came the crashing of timbers, the cracking of masonry, the whirling of a thousand missiles through the air. Before the very eyes of the stunned, bewildered defenders, dismounting near the parade ground, the huge gates and pillars fell to the ground.

The gates had been dynamited. Then it was that Truxton King remembered. Marlanx's sappers had been quietly at work for days drilling from the common to the gates. It was a strange coincidence that Marlanx should have chosen this day for his culminating assault on the castle. The skirmish at daybreak had hurried his arrangements no doubt, but none the less were his plans complete. The explosives had been laid during the night. The fuses reached to the mouth of the tunnel across the common. As he swept up the avenue at the head of his command, hawk faced and with glittering eyes, he snarled the command to put fire to the fuses.

A moment later his vanguard streamed through the aperture and faced the deadly fire from the driveway.

At last they began to advance across the grassy meadow. When one man fell under the fire of the guardsmen another rushed into his place. Three times the indomitable Graustarkians drove them back and as often did Marlanx drag them up again, exalted by the example he set.

"Gad, he is a soldier!" cried Truxton. "Hello! There's my friend Brutus. He's no coward either. Here's a try for you, Brutus."

He dropped to his knees and took deliberate aim at the frozen henchman. The discovery that there were three bullets in Brutus' breast when he was picked up long afterward did not affect the young man's contention that his was the one that had found the heart.

The fall of Brutus urged the Iron Count to greater fury. His horse had been shot from under him. He was on his feet, calling to his men to follow him as he moved toward the stubborn low of green and red. Bullets hissed about his ears, but he gave no heed to them.

The commander of the guard gave the command to fall back slowly toward the castle.

Firing at every step, they crossed the parade ground and then made a quick dash for the shelter of the long balconies. Marlanx, down in the pe-

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Firing at every step, they crossed the parade ground and then made a quick dash for the shelter of the long balconies. Marlanx, down in the pe-

CHAPTER XX. THE LAST STAND. SOON after 5 o'clock a man in the topmost window of the tower called down that the forces in the hills were moving in a compact body toward the ridges below the southern gates.

One hundred picked men were to be left inside the castle gates with Vos Engo, prepared to meet any flank movement that might be attempted. Three hundred mounted men were selected to make the dash down Castle avenue straight into the camp of the sharpshooters. It was the purpose of the house guards to wage a fierce and noisy conflict off the avenue and then retire to the castle as abruptly as they left it, to be ready for Marlanx should he decide to make a final desperate effort to seize their stronghold.

The dash of the 300 through the gates and down the avenue was the most spectacular experience in Truxton's life. He was up with Quinnox and General Braze, galloping well in front of the yelling troops. These mounted carabineers, riding as Bedouins, swept like thunder down the street, whirled into the broad, open arena beyond the duke's palace and were upon the surprised ruffians before they were fully awake to the situation.

They came tumbling out of barns and sheds, clutching their rifles in nerveless hands, aghast in the