HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

IN THE IRISH BRIGADE: A TALE OF WAR IN FLANDERS AND SPAIN

George Henty

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Содержание

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Preface

The evils arising from religious persecution, sectarian hatred, ill government, and oppression were never more strongly illustrated than by the fact that, for a century, Ireland, which has since that time furnished us with a large proportion of our best soldiers, should have been among our bitterest and most formidable foes, and her sons fought in the ranks of our greatest continental enemy. It was not because they were adherents of the house of Stuart that Irishmen left their native country to take service abroad, but because life in Ireland was rendered well-nigh intolerable for Catholics, on account of the nature and severity of the laws against them, and the bitterness with which those laws were carried into effect.

An Irish Catholic had no prospects of employment or advancement at home. He could hold no civil appointment of any kind. He could not serve as an officer, nor even enlist as a private, in the army. He could not hold land. He was subject to imprisonment, and even death, on the most trifling and frivolous accusations brought against him by the satellites of the Irish Government. Not only could he not sit in the parliament of Dublin, but he could not even vote at elections. It was because they believed that the return of the Stuarts would mean relief, from at least some of their disabilities, and liberty to carry out the offices of their religion openly, and to dwell in peace, free from denunciation and persecution, that the Irish remained so long faithful to the Jacobite cause.

It was not, indeed, until 1774 that the Catholics in Ireland were admitted to qualify themselves as subjects of the crown, and not until the following year that they were permitted to enlist in the army. Irish regiments had enlisted in France, previous to the Convention of Limerick; but it was the Irish army that defended that town, and, having been defeated, passed over to France, that raised the Irish Brigade to the position of an important factor in the French army, which it held for nearly a hundred years, bearing a prominent part in every siege and battle in Flanders, Germany, Italy, and Spain. A long succession of French marshals and generals have testified to the extraordinary bravery of these troops, and to their good conduct under all circumstances. Not only in France did Irishmen play a prominent part in military matters, but they were conspicuous in every continental army, and their descendants are still to be found bearing honoured names throughout Europe.

Happily, those days are past, and for over a hundred years the courage and military capacity of Irishmen have been employed in the service of Great Britain. For records of the doings of some of the regiments of the Irish Brigade, during the years 1706-1710, I am indebted to the painstaking account of the Irish Brigade in the service of France, by J. C. O'Callaghan; while the accounts of the war in Spain are drawn from the official report, given in Boyer's Annals of the Reign of Queen Anne, which contains a mine of information of the military and civil events of the time.

G. A. Henty.

Chapter 1: Fresh from Ireland

A number of officers of O'Brien's regiment of foot, forming a part of the Irish Brigade in the service of France, were gathered in a handsome apartment in the Rue des Fosses, on the 20th of June, 1701, when the door opened, and their colonel entered with a young officer in the uniform of the regiment.

"I have asked you here, gentlemen all," he said, "to present to you a new comrade, Desmond Kennedy, who, through the good offices of the Marshal de Noailles, has been appointed, by His Gracious Majesty, to a cornetcy in our regiment.

"Now, gentlemen, I have known, and doubtless you can all of you recall, instances where the harmony of a regiment has been grievously disturbed, and bad blood caused, owing to the want of a clear understanding upon matters connected with a family; which might have been avoided, had proper explanations been given at the commencement. I have spoken frankly to Mr. Kennedy, and he has stated to me certain particulars, and has not only authorized me, but requested me to repeat them to you, feeling that you had a right to know who it was that had come among you, and so to avoid questioning on matters that are, of all others, prone to lead to trouble among gentlemen.

"Beyond the fact that he is a Kennedy, and that his father had to fly from Ireland, two years after the siege of Limerick, owing to a participation in some plot to bring about a fresh rising in favour of King James, he is unacquainted with his family history. He has never heard from his father, and only knows that he made for France after throwing the usurper's spies off his track, and there can be little doubt that it was his intention to take service in this brigade. There have been several Kennedys in the service, and I have little doubt that this young gentleman's father was the Murroch Kennedy who joined the third regiment, about that time, and was killed a few months afterwards at the battle of Breda. His death would account for the fact that his son never received a letter from him. At the time when he left Ireland, the child was some two years old, and, as communication was difficult, and the boy so young, Murroch might very well have put off writing until the boy grew older, not thinking that death might intervene, as it did, to prevent his doing so.

"This is all simple and straightforward enough, and you will, I am sure, have no hesitation in extending the hand of friendship to the son of a gallant Irishman, who died fighting in the ranks of the Irish Brigade, exiled, like the rest of us, for loyalty to our king.

"Still, gentlemen, you might, perhaps, wonder how it is that he knows no more of his family, and it was that this question might be disposed of, once for all, that I am making this statement to you on his behalf. He was not brought up, as you might expect, with some of his father's connections. Whether the family were so scattered that there was no one to whom he could safely entrust the child, I know not, but, in point of fact, he sent him to one of the last houses where a loyal gentleman would wish his son to be brought up. We all know by name and reputation–I and your majors knew him personally–the gallant James O'Carroll, who died, fighting bravely, at the siege of Limerick. He was succeeded in his estate by his brother John, one of the few Irishmen of good family who turned traitor to his king, and who secured the succession to his brother's possessions by becoming an ardent supporter of the usurper, and by changing his religion.

"Why Murroch Kennedy should have chosen such a man as the guardian of his son is a mystery. Whether they had been great friends in earlier times, when John O'Carroll professed as warm an attachment to the Stuart cause as did his brother James, or whether Kennedy possessed such knowledge of O'Carroll's traitorous dealings with the Dutchman as would, if generally known, have rendered him so hateful to all loyal men that he could no longer have remained in the country, and so had a hold over him, Mr. Kennedy can tell us nothing. He was brought by his nurse to Castle Kilkargan, and was left with John O'Carroll. It is clear that the latter accepted the charge unwillingly, for he sent the child to a farm, where he remained until he was eight years old, and then placed him

with the parish priest, who educated him. The lad visited at the houses of the neighbouring gentry, shot and rowed and fished with their sons. O'Carroll, however, beyond paying for his maintenance, all but ignored his existence, showing no interest whatever in him, up to the time when he furnished him with a letter of introduction to de Noailles, except that he made him a present of a gun, as soon as he became of an age to use one. He never attempted to tamper with his loyalty to King James, and in fact, until he sent for him to ask what profession he would choose, he never exchanged ten words with him, from the time that he was brought to the castle.

"We can each form our own theory as to the cause of such strange conduct. He may have given a pledge, to Murroch, that the boy should be brought up a loyalist, and a true son of the church. It may have been that the loyalty of the boy's father formed so unpleasant a contrast to his own disloyalty, and apostasy, that he disliked the sight of him. However, these theories can make no difference in our reception of Desmond Kennedy, as a gentleman of a good family, and as the son of a loyal adherent of the king; and as such, I think that I can, from what I have already seen of him, assert that he is one who will be a good comrade, a pleasant companion, and a credit to the regiment."

The subject of these remarks was a tall and handsome young fellow, some sixteen years of age. He was already broad at the shoulders, and promised to become an exceedingly powerful man. He had stood somewhat behind the colonel, watching calmly the effect of his words on those whose comrade he was to be, for he knew how punctilious were his countrymen, on the subject of family, placing as much or even more value than did the Scots, on points of genealogy, and of descent from the old families. His frank open face, his bearing and manner, did as much to smooth his way as did the speech of his colonel, who, when he had been introduced to him, two days before, had questioned him very closely on the subject of his family. It had almost been a matter of satisfaction to Desmond when he heard, from the colonel, that the officer who had fallen at Breda was probably the father of whom he had no remembrance; for, from the time he attained the age of boyhood, it had been a grief and pain that he should never have heard from his father, who, it now appeared, had been prevented by death from ever communicating with him.

The officers received him cordially. They had little doubt that he was the son of the Murroch Kennedy, of Dillon's regiment, although, after they separated, some wonder was expressed as to the reason why the latter had committed his son to the care of so notorious a traitor as John O'Carroll.

Desmond had been specially introduced to two of the young lieutenants, Patrick O'Neil and Phelim O'Sullivan, and these took him off with them to their quarters.

"And what is the last news from Ireland? I suppose that the confiscations have ceased, for the excellent reason that they have seized the estates of every loyal gentleman in the country?"

"That was done long ago, in the neighbourhood of Kilkargan, and, so far as I know, everywhere the feeling is as bitter as ever, among those who have been dispossessed, and also among the tenants and peasantry, who have found themselves handed over to the mercies of Dutchmen, or other followers of William. At Kilkargan there was not that grievance; but, although they had still one of the old family as their master, they could not forgive him for deserting to the side of the usurper, nor for changing his religion in order to do pleasure to William. Certainly, he can have derived but little satisfaction from the estates. He seldom showed himself out of doors, never without two or three armed servants, all of whom were strangers from the north, and he was often away, for months together, at Dublin."

"And what did you do with yourself?"

"I fished, shot, and rode. I had many friends among the gentry of the neighbourhood, who would, doubtless, have shown less kindness than they did, had it not been for the neglect with which O'Carroll treated me. His unpopularity was all in my favour.

"However, I have one good reason for being obliged to him, since it was through him that I obtained my commission. He told me that, in his young days, he had been at a French college with the

duke. They had been great friends there, and he thought that, in memory of this, de Noailles would procure me a commission."

"I suppose the real fact was, Kennedy, that he was glad to get rid of you altogether?"

"I think that is likely enough. He certainly raised no objection, whatever, to my going abroad, and seemed to think it natural that I should choose the Irish Brigade, here, in preference to the British service. He said something unpleasant about its not being singular that I should be a rebel, when I always associated with rebels, to which I replied that it seemed to me that I could hardly be blamed for that, seeing that my father had been what he called a rebel, and that I had little choice in the matter of my associates; and that if I had been educated at a school in England, instead of by good Father O'Leary, I might have had other sentiments. He replied that my sentiments were nothing to him, one way or the other. He was glad to wash his hands of me altogether; and, at any rate, if I went to France, I could drink the health of King James every day without his being involved in my treason."

"It almost looked as if he wished you to grow up a rebel, Kennedy, or he would hardly have placed you in the charge of a priest. He may have reckoned that if there was another rising, you might join it, and so be taken off his hands, altogether."

"Whatever the reason was, I have certainly cause for satisfaction that he removed me from the care of the farmer's wife, with whom he at first placed me, and arranged with the priest to take charge of me altogether. O'Leary himself had been educated at Saint Omer, and was a splendid fellow. He was very popular on the countryside, and it was owing to my being with him that I was admitted to the houses of the gentry around, whereas, had I remained in the farmhouse in which O'Carroll first placed me, I should only have associated with the sons of other tenants."

"It looked, at any rate, as if he wished to make a gentleman of you, Kennedy."

"Yes, I suppose my father had asked him to do so. At any rate, I was infinitely better off than I should have been if he had taken me in at Kilkargan, for in that case I should have had no associates, whatever. As it was, I scarcely ever exchanged a word with him, until that last meeting. He sent down, by one of his servants, the letter to the Duc de Noailles, and a bag containing money for my outfit here, and for the purchase of a horse, together with a line saying that he had done his duty by me, and had no desire to hear from me in the future. I was inclined to send the money back to him, but Father O'Leary persuaded me not to do so, saying that I must be in a position to buy these things, if I obtained a commission; and that, no doubt, the money had been given me, not for my own sake, but because he felt that he owed it to me, for some service rendered to him by my father."

"It was an ungracious way of doing it," O'Sullivan said, "but, in your circumstances, I should have taken the money had it come from the old one himself. It is, perhaps, as well that it should have been done in such a manner that you may well feel you owe no great gratitude towards such a man."

"And how did you get over here?"

"There was no great difficulty about that. In spite of the activity of the English cruisers, constant communication is kept up between Ireland and France, and fortunately I had, a short time before, made the acquaintance of one of your officers, who was over there, in disguise, gathering recruits for the Brigade."

"Yes, there are a good many agents in Ireland engaged in that work. There is no difficulty in obtaining recruits, for there is scarcely a young Irishman who does not long to be with his countrymen, who have won such credit out here, and many abstain from joining only because they do not know how to set about it. The work of the agents, then, is principally to arrange means for their crossing the channel. It is well that the supply is steadily kept up, for, I can assure you, every battle fought makes very heavy gaps in our ranks; but in spite of that, three fresh regiments have been raised, in the last year, partly by fresh comers from Ireland, and partly by Irish deserters from Marlborough's regiments.

"But I am interrupting your story."

"Well, after leaving Mr. O'Carroll, and making my preparations, I paid a visit to the cottage where the officer was staying, in disguise, and told him that I wanted to cross. He gave instructions

as to how to proceed. I was to go to a certain street in Cork, and knock at a certain door. When it was opened, I was to say, 'The sea is calm and the sky is bright'.

"'Then', he said, 'you will be taken in hand, and put on board one of the craft engaged in the work of carrying our recruits across the water. You will be landed at Saint Malo, where there is an agent of the Brigade, who gives instructions to the recruits as to how they are to proceed, supplies them with money enough for the journey, and a man to accompany each party, and act as interpreter on the way.

"I carried out his instructions, crossed the channel in a lugger with thirty young peasants, bound also for Paris, and, on landing at Saint Malo, took my place in the diligence for Paris; having, fortunately, no need for an interpreter. On my presenting my letter to the Marquis de Noailles, he received me with great kindness, and treated me as a guest, until he had obtained me a commission in your regiment.

"Now, when are we likely to go on active service?"

"Soon, I expect," O'Neil said; "but whether we shall be sent to the Peninsula, or to Flanders, no one knows. In fact, it is likely enough that we shall, for the present, remain here; until it is seen how matters go, and where reinforcements will be most required. It is but ten months since we came into garrison, in Paris, and we may therefore expect to be one of the last regiments ordered off.

"For my part, I am in no particular hurry to exchange comfortable quarters, and good living, and such adventures as may fall to the lot of a humble subaltern, for roughing it in the field; where, as has been the case ever since the Brigade was formed, we get a good deal more than our fair share of hard work and fighting."

"I should have thought that you would all have liked that," Desmond said, in some surprise.

"Enough is as good as a feast," the other said; "and when you have done a few weeks' work in trenches, before a town you are besieging; stood knee deep for hours in mud, soaked to the skin with rain, and with the enemy's shot coming through the parapet every half minute or so; you will see that it is not all fun and glory.

"Then, too, you see, we have no particular interest in the quarrels between France and Germany. When we fight, we fight rather for the honour of the Irish Brigade, than for the glory of France. We have a grudge against the Dutch, and fight them as interested parties, seeing that it was by his Dutch troops that William conquered Ireland. As to the English troops, we have no particular enmity against them. Cromwell's business is an old story, and I don't suppose that the English soldier feels any particular love for Queen Anne, or any animosity against us. And after all, we are nearer in blood to them than we are to the Germans, Austrians, or Spaniards, for there are few, even of our oldest families, who have not, many times since the days of Strongbow, intermarried with the English settlers. At any rate, there are still plenty of adherents of King James in England and Scotland. We speak the same language, and form part of the same nation, and I own that I would rather fight against any foreign foe than against them."

"So would I," Desmond said heartily. "Our only point of difference is that we don't agree as to who should be king. We want a Catholic king, and the majority of the English want a Protestant king. We have fought on the subject, and been beaten. Next time, we hope that we may succeed. If the king were to land in England again, I would fight heart and soul in his cause; but whether the French beat the English, in the present war, or the English beat the French, will not, as far as I can see, make much difference to King James; who, Father O'Leary tells me, is, in his opinion, supported here by the French king from no great love for himself, but because, so long as James has adherents in Ireland, Scotland, and England, he is able to play him off against the English Government."

The other young men laughed.

"For heaven's sake, Kennedy, keep such sentiments as these to yourself. It is a matter of faith, in our brigade, that we are fighting in the cause of King James, as against the English usurper. Now that William is dead, and James's daughter on the throne, matters are complicated somewhat; and if

the Parliament had settled the succession, after Anne, on her brother, there might have been an end of the quarrel altogether. But now that they have settled it on Sophia of Hanover, granddaughter of James the 1st, and her descendants, subject to the restriction that they shall be Protestants, the quarrel does not seem likely to be healed."

"This priest of yours must be a dangerous man," O'Sullivan said.

"Not at all. I can assure you, he is devoted to the king; but, as he told me, there is no use in Irishmen always closing their eyes to the true state of things. He says that we must rely upon ourselves, and our loyal friends in Scotland and England, but that he is sure the king will never be placed on his throne by French bayonets. A small auxiliary force may be sent over, but, in all these years, Louis has made no real effort to assist him; and even if, for his own purposes, he sent a great army to England, and placed him on the throne, he would not be able to maintain himself there for a month after the French had withdrawn, for even a rightful king would be hated by the people upon whom he had been forced, by a foreign power, especially a power that had, for centuries, been regarded as their chief enemy. If he had been in earnest, Louis would have sent over a great army, instead of a few thousand men, to Ireland, when such a diversion would have turned the scale in our favour. As he did not do so then, he is not likely to do so in the future. The king is useful to him, here, by keeping up an agitation that must, to some extent, cripple the strength of England; but, were a Stuart on the throne, he would have to listen to the wishes of the majority of his people, and France would gain nothing by placing him there. Moreover, she would lose the services of twenty thousand of her best soldiers, for naturally the exiles would all return home, and what is now the most valuable force in the French service, might then become an equally important one in the service of Britain."

"I am glad that this priest of yours remains quietly in Kilkargan, for, if he were to come here, and expound his views among our regiments, he might cause quite a defection among them. At any rate, Kennedy, I should advise you not to take to propagating his views in the regiment. It would not add to your comfort, or ours, and there are a good many hot-headed men who would take up the idea that you had been infected by O'Carroll's principles."

"It would not be well for anyone to say as much to my face," Desmond said. "Father O'Leary is loyal to the backbone, although he has his own ideas as to the hopelessness of our obtaining any efficient help from Louis. He thinks that it will be far better to trust to our friends at home, and that, even did Louis carry out his promises, it would in the long run harm rather than benefit King James."

"I am not saying that his view may not be correct, Kennedy. I am only saying that the view would be a very unpopular one, among the Brigade. We are fighting for France because we believe that France, in turn, will aid in placing our rightful king on the throne, and if we once entertained the notion that Louis was deceiving us, that he had no intention of helping us, and that, if he did place James on the throne, he would alienate all his sympathizers at home, we should ask ourselves of what use was it, spending our blood in fighting the battles of France."

"At any rate, I will take your advice, O'Sullivan, and will keep my lips sealed, as to Father O'Leary's views. As you see, by my presence here, he has not convinced me, and as long as there is a hope that, by the aid of a French army, we may yet see our king come to his own again, I shall do my best to prove myself a faithful soldier of France. I have chosen my career with my eyes open. A loyal Irishman cannot obtain employment, still less military employment, in his own country, and accordingly, we are to be found fighting as soldiers of fortune in every country in Europe. At least there is some chance that we may be benefiting the royal cause by fighting for the country that gave King James shelter, and rendered him armed assistance in his struggle with the usurper, and will probably give aid, more or less efficient, when the next attempt is made. In other countries we are but soldiers of fortune. In France we may regard ourselves as serving our own king by serving King Louis."

"Do you speak French well, Kennedy?" O'Neil said, changing the conversation abruptly.

"Yes. Father O'Leary took care of that, for I always said that I should take service abroad, as there was clearly nothing else to do for a living, and, consequently, he generally talked to me in that language, and I speak it as well as I do English or Irish."

"You have not had much practice with the sword, I suppose?"

"Not so much as I could wish, though I never lost an opportunity of practising. There were several of the tenants who served in the regiment James O'Carroll raised. I used to practise with them, but I shall lose no time in getting the best instruction I can, here."

"You may want it, Kennedy. We are not particularly liked by the French officers, because we are generally chosen to lead an assault, or for other desperate service. Duelling is, of course, forbidden, but that in no way prevents duels from being frequent. As for fighting in action, as far as I have seen or heard, swordsmanship does not go for a great deal. If you press on hard enough, and there are men following you, the enemy give way, generally, before it comes to hand-to-hand fighting. If, on the other hand, they are the more numerous, and hold their position in the breach, it is the musketry that settles it. It is only when two officers happen to meet, in a fierce fight, that swordsmanship becomes of importance.

"We have a good school in the regiment, and there are several famous masters of fence in the town, so I should advise you to give a couple of hours a day, for a time, to making yourself a first-rate swordsman. I have just left off. Our *maitre d'armes* tells me I am too hotheaded ever to make a fine blade; but I should fancy, from the way you have been arguing, that you are likely to be cooler than most of us in a fencing bout. It is the fault with us all that we are apt to lose our tempers, and indeed Maitre Maupert, who is the best teacher here, declines absolutely to take any of us as pupils, saying that, while we may do excellently well in battle, he can never hope to make first-class fencers of men who cannot be relied upon to keep their heads cool, and to fight with pointed weapons as calmly as they might fence with a friend in a saloon."

"Well, I shall work hard to become a fair swordsman," Desmond said, with a laugh. "I suppose there is plenty of time to spare."

"Plenty. We have a couple of hours' drill in the morning, and after that, except when you are officer of the day, you can spend your time as you like. The colonel and two of his officers attend at the king's levees, when he is in Paris, but, as he spends the greater portion of his time at Versailles, we are seldom called upon for that duty."

A few days after Desmond's arrival, the colonel took him with him to Saint Germain, where James the 3rd, as his supporters called him, held a miniature court. The colonel presented Desmond as a loyal subject of His Majesty, and a newly-joined cornet in his regiment.

The young prince was a lad of eighteen. He was surrounded by a group of courtiers, who had accompanied or followed his father into exile, and whose insistence upon treating him with the respect due to a monarch was in no slight degree galling to him, for, as he often declared to the few friends he had about his own age, he had all the disadvantages of being a king, without any of the advantages.

He was at once taken with the appearance of Desmond Kennedy.

"Ah, Monsieur Kennedy," he said, after the ceremony of presentation had been completed; "I wish that I had all my faithful subjects, of the Irish Brigade, across the water with me; and that I could put on a uniform like yours, and fight at their head for my rights."

"I would that you had, Sire. It would be a good day for us all; and believe me, that either in Ireland or Scotland you would soon find yourself at the head of an army, many times more numerous than our brigade."

"They all tell me that I must wait," the young prince said, with a sigh, "but I have been waiting a long time now, and it seems no nearer than when I was a child. However, the King of France has promised me that it cannot be much longer; and that, when Marlborough is defeated, and his army driven back across the sea, he will send a fleet and an army to place me on my throne."

"We shall all rejoice, indeed, when that time comes, Sire; and I am sure there is not a man in the Irish Brigade who will not follow you to the death, and serve you as faithfully as many of them did your royal father."

"I hope you will come here often, Monsieur Kennedy. I am sure that I shall like you very much, and I think that you would always say what you thought, and tell me the real truth about things."

"Sire!" one of the older men exclaimed, reproachfully.

"I mean no reflection on anyone, Dillon. You all say what I am sure you feel, but you have grown accustomed to waiting, and all think of what is politic, and complain that I speak too frankly. Monsieur Kennedy comes straight from Ireland, and he is not old enough, yet, to have learned to measure his words, and will not be always afraid that anything he may say will be carried to the king.

"How I wish that the king would send me with Marshal Tallard!"

"That would never do, Sire. The English are your subjects, and they would never forgive you, if you were to appear in the field with a French army, fighting against them."

"But the Irish Brigade fight, Dillon?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, but they are in the service of France, and, by the terms of the treaty of Limerick, were allowed to expatriate themselves, and to enter the French service. We have, in fact, renounced our nationality, with the consent of the English, and, if taken prisoners, could only be treated as captured foes, and not as traitors. Of course, when Your Majesty ascends the throne, we shall again become British subjects."

"I trust that that may come soon, Dillon, and for your sake, rather than my own. When the time comes, you will not find me backward, but this weary waiting tries me sorely, and, were it not for those who have remained faithful to our cause, I would gladly resign such chances as I have of succeeding to the throne of England, and take a commission in the Irish Brigade."

Dillon and some of the elder men shook their heads.

"Can you wonder?" the young prince said, passionately. "Here is Master Kennedy, who is younger than myself, though a free life and exercise have made him a man, in comparison to me. He has his life before him. He will bear his part in many a pitched battle, and, doubtless, in many a private adventure. He is his own master, and, as long as he does his duty, there are none to say, 'you must not do that; you must not say that; you must preserve your dignity; you must speak softly and discreetly; you must wait patiently.'

"I envy you, Master Kennedy. I envy you, from the bottom of my heart! Come often to see me. You will always be welcome;" and, turning abruptly away, he left the chamber hurriedly, to conceal the tears which filled his eyes.

His counsellors shook their heads solemnly, but Colonel O'Brien said, warmly:

"What the king says is natural, for a man of his age; and, for my part, it has increased my respect for him. I say it without offence, but what could be duller than the life this lad leads here? He has been brought up, literally, without a pleasure. His late Majesty, heaven rest his soul! was absorbed in his religious exercises, and nothing could have been more trying, to a boy, than a court in which the priests and confessors were practically supreme. Since his father's death, things have been but little better, and now I see that, at heart, the young king has plenty of spirit and energy, I can feel that his life has been that of a caged hawk, and I am not surprised that he occasionally breaks out into revolt against it. It would, methinks, do him a world of good, had he a few companions about his own age, like Ensign Kennedy. I would even say that, although I can quite understand that, as King of England, he could not well take a commission in one of our regiments, he might at least be placed with one of our most experienced and honoured colonels, in order to learn military exercises, and to mix with the officers as any other nobleman might do, when attached to the regiment."

Murmurs of dissent arose among the counsellors.

"Well, gentlemen," the colonel went on, "I have no desire to interfere with your functions, but, in my opinion, it is good that a king should also be a general. Did anyone think any the worse of Dutch

William, that he was able to command his army, personally? None of us can believe that King James will ever succeed to the inheritance of his fathers, without fighting; and it would be well, indeed, that he should not appear as a puppet, but as one qualified to command. It was the fault, or rather the misfortune, of his father, that he was unfit to lead his troops in the field. Had he been able to do so, he would, in all probability, have died King of England, instead of as a fugitive and a pensioner of King Louis. In one way, it grieves me to see that the young king feels his position acutely; but, on the other hand, I am rejoiced to see that he is in no way lacking in spirit, and that he longs to be out of his cage, and to try his wings for himself.

"Well, gentlemen, having had my say, I will take my leave of you, as duty calls me back to my regiment. I trust that the frankness with which I have spoken will not be misunderstood."

So saying, with a bow to the courtiers he left the room, followed by Kennedy.

"They mean well," he said, after they had mounted, and ridden off at a gallop; "but it is a pity that these gentlemen, all loyal and honourable men as they are, should surround the young king. They suited, well enough, to the mood of his father, who was always wanting in spirit, and was broken down, not only by the loss of his kingdom, but by the conduct of his daughters; and, what with that, and his devotion to religion, he was rather a monk than a monarch. He believed–but most mistakenly–that he had a genius for politics, and was constantly intriguing with his adherents at home, notably Marlborough and other lords, from whom he obtained fair words and promises of support, but nothing else. But though he could plan, he did not possess a spark of energy, and was one of the most undecided of men, though, like most undecided men, he could be extremely obstinate; and, unfortunately, the more wrong he was, the more obstinately he held to his course.

"However, all this can make no difference in our devotion to the Stuart cause. But I hail, with satisfaction, the prospect that, in his son, we may have one to whom we may feel personally loyal; for there can be no doubt that men will fight with more vigour, for a person to whom they are attached, than for an abstract idea."

"I have heard Father O'Leary say the same, sir. His opinion was that, had the late king possessed the qualities that commanded the personal admiration and fidelity of his followers, and excited something like enthusiasm among the people at large, he would never have lost his throne; nor, could he have led his armies, as did Gustavus or Charles the 12th of Sweden, would William of Orange ever have ventured to cross to England."

"It was a bad business, altogether, lad. His cause was practically lost, from the day that William set foot upon English soil. He had, in reality, no personal friends; and those who would have remained faithful to the cause, were paralysed by his indecision and feebleness. Charles the Martyr made many mistakes, but he had the passionate adherence of his followers. His personality, and his noble appearance, did as much for him as the goodness of his cause; while his son, James, repelled rather than attracted personal devotion. I trust that his grandson will inherit some of his qualities. His outburst, today, gave me hope that he will do so; but one must not build too much on that. It may have been only the pettishness of a young man, sick of the constant tutelage to which he is subjected, and the ennui of the life he leads, rather than the earnestness of a noble spirit.

"Of course, Kennedy, I need not tell you that it would be well to make no mention, to anyone, of the scene that you have witnessed."

"I shall certainly make no mention of it to anyone, sir. I am sorry, indeed, for the young king. His life must be a dreadful one, conscious of the impossibility of breaking the bonds in which he is held, and knowing that his every word and action will be reported, by spies, to the King of France."

For three months, Desmond Kennedy worked hard at drill and sword exercise. He became a general favourite in the regiment, owing to his good temper, high spirits, and readiness to join in everything that was going on.

He went over, several times, to Saint Germain. At first, the king's counsellors looked but coldly upon him, and he would have ceased to come there, had it not been for the unaffected pleasure shown

by the king at his visits. In time, however, two of the principal men at the little court requested him to have a conversation with them, before going into the king's chamber.

"You will understand, Mr. Kennedy," one of them said, when they had seated themselves in a quiet spot in the garden; "that we, standing in the position of His Majesty's counsellors, are in a position of great responsibility. His Majesty, as we admit is but natural, chafes over the inaction to which he is condemned by circumstances; and is apt, at times, to express his desire for action in terms which, if they came to the ears of King Louis, as we have every reason to believe is sometimes the case, would do him and the cause serious injury. Naturally, we should be glad for him to have companions of his own age, but it behoves us to be most careful that such companionship should not add to our difficulties in this direction; and we should view with satisfaction a friendship between the young king and one who, like yourself, is nearly of his own age and, as we can see, full of spirit and energy. In these matters the king is deficient; but it would be better that he should, for the present, remain as he is, rather than that he should, in acquiring more manly habits, grow still more impatient and discontented with his position.

"We have naturally taken some little trouble in finding out how you stand in your regiment, and we hear nothing but good of you. You are much liked by your comrades, pay the greatest attention to your military exercises, and are regarded as one who will, some day, do much credit to the regiment; and we feel that, in most respects, your influence could not but be advantageous to the young king; but the good that this might do him would be more than balanced, were you to render him still more impatient than he is for action. You may well suppose that we, exiles as we have been for so many years from our country, are not less impatient than he for the day of action; but we know that such action must depend upon the King of France, and not upon ourselves. We would gladly risk all, in an effort to place him on the throne of England, to repair past injustices and cruel wrongs; but, were we to move without the assistance of Louis, instead of achieving that object we might only bring fresh ruin, confiscations, and death upon the royalists of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Are you of our opinion?"

"Completely so, sir. Of course, I know but little of what is passing, save in the neighbourhood where I have been brought up; but I know that there, even among the king's most devoted adherents, there is a feeling that nothing can possibly be done until France lends her aid, in earnest. The English army is far stronger than it was when we were last in arms, and when William had to rely, almost entirely, upon his Dutch troops and Dutch generals; while the friends of the Stuarts are almost without arms, without leaders, and without organization."

"That is good, Mr. Kennedy; and, if we were to sanction King James's forming an intimacy with you, can I understand that we could rely upon your not using your influence to add to his impatience for action, and discontent with his present position?"

"Certainly, sir. Being so recently from Ireland, I could assure him that even his most devoted adherents, there, are of opinion that no rising could be attended with success, unless backed by French arms, and especially by the aid of the Irish Brigade, which has already won such renown for itself, and whose appearance would excite the greatest enthusiasm among all Irishmen."

"In that case, Mr. Kennedy, so far from throwing any difficulties in the way of His Majesty seeking your companionship, we shall encourage him, and shall be glad to see you here, as often as your military duties will permit."

Chapter 2: A Valiant Band

The permission was not attended with the result that the young prince's counsellors had hoped. For a time, James showed a lively pleasure when Desmond rode over to Saint Germain, walked with him in the gardens, and talked to him alone in his private apartments, and professed a warm friendship for him; but Desmond was not long in discovering that his first estimate of the prince's character had been wholly erroneous, and that his outburst at their first meeting had been the result of pique and irritation, rather than any real desire to lead a more active life. Upon the contrary, he was constitutionally indolent and lethargic. There were horses at his command, but it was seldom, indeed, that he would take the trouble to cross the saddle, although walking was distasteful to him. Even when speaking of his hopes of ascending the throne of England, he spoke without enthusiasm, and said one day:

"It is a pity that it cannot be managed without fuss and trouble. I hate trouble."

"Nothing can be done worth doing, without trouble, Your Majesty," Desmond said sturdily. "It almost seems to me that, if everything could be had without trouble, it would not be worth having."

"How do you mean, Mr. Kennedy?"

"I may illustrate it by saying, Sire, that no true fisherman would care about angling in a pond, close to his house, and so full of fish, that he had but to drop a baited hook into the water to bring up one immediately. The pleasure of fishing consists largely in the hard work that it demands. It is, perhaps, miles to a stream across the hills, and a long day's work may produce but a half dozen fish; but these the angler prizes in proportion to the trouble he has had to get them. I think that, were I born heir to a throne, I would rather that it should cost me hardship, toil, and danger to obtain it, than walk into a cathedral, a few days after my father's death, and there be crowned."

"I do not agree with you, at all," James said, shortly. "If anything could not be had without toil, hardship, and danger, as you say, I would willingly go without it."

"Then, Sire, I can only hope that the toil and danger may be borne by your devoted followers, and that you may be spared them, personally."

James looked sharply up at his companion, to gather whether the words were spoken sarcastically, but Desmond's face, though flushed, was calm and serious. Nevertheless, indolent as he was, James felt that the words were a reproof; that, although he had at first liked him, there was in reality little in common between him and this energetic young fellow; and the next time he came, he received him with much less cordiality than before; while Desmond, who was beginning to tire of the companionship of one who lacked, alike, the fun and humour, and the restless activity of his comrades, Patrick and Phelim; and who saw that the professions of James's friendship were but short lived, came over to Saint Germain less frequently, until, at last, he only rode over with his colonel, or when some duty called him there.

"So you have been a failure, Master Kennedy," the counsellor who had first spoken to him said, one day, when the change in the king's manner became evident to them all.

"I am afraid so, sir," Desmond replied with a smile. "I have no doubt that it was my fault. Perhaps I was not patient enough with him; but, indeed, my efforts to rouse him to take exercise, to practise in arms, and so on, were so ill received, that I felt I was doing more harm than good."

"I was afraid that it would be so," the other said, regretfully. "You see, during his later years, his father gave up his time almost entirely to religious observances; and, consequently, the lad's life was very dull and monotonous. Constitutionally, he undoubtedly takes after his father, who, with all his virtues, was at once indolent and undecided. We have observed, with regret, his disinclination to bestir himself in any way. Seeing that we, who were his father's companions, are too old, or too much disheartened, to be lively companions for him, we had hoped that the talk of one of spirit, and of his own age, might have roused him to make some exertions to overcome his disinclination for anything

like active exercise. I think now, however, that we were wrong; that the tonic was too strong; that he could not but feel that your abundance of spirits, and life, were too much for him; and that the companion he needs is one who could, to some extent, sympathize with him, and who could, perhaps, make more allowance for the manner in which he has been brought up.

"We do not blame you at all. I am sure that you have done your best. But it is evident that the contrast between you and himself has been too strong a one; and that, feeling he cannot hope to emulate your soldierly activity, he has come to resent it, as a sort of reflection upon himself."

Desmond was, by no means, sorry at being relieved of the necessity of paying frequent visits to Saint Germain. In the first place, he begrudged the time that was taken from his fencing lessons, at which he had worked enthusiastically; and in the next, he had felt, after two or three visits, that between himself and the young king there was really nothing in common. Full of life and spirits himself, it seemed to him nothing short of disgraceful that one, who aspired to rule, should take no pains whatever to fit himself for a throne, or to cultivate qualities that would render himself popular among a high-spirited people. And, as he came to understand James more thoroughly, he had found his visits increasingly irksome, all the more so, as he felt their inutility.

"Thank goodness," he said, to his two friends, when he went home that day, "I have done with Saint Germain. I am as warm an adherent as ever of the cause of the Stuarts, and should be perfectly ready, when the time comes, to fight my hardest for them; but I would vastly rather fight for the king, than converse with him."

"I suppose, by what I have seen of him, that he must be somewhat wearisome," Phelim O'Sullivan said, with a laugh. "Fortunately, wit and gaiety are not essential qualities on the part of a monarch; but I must own that, treasonable as it may sound, I fear His Majesty is lacking in other qualities, far more essential in a monarch. I should say that he is kindly and well disposed, he wishes to be fair and just, and may turn out a wise ruler; but he is altogether deficient in energy. I suppose there is no occasion for a king, safely seated upon a throne, to be energetic; but a prince in exile should possess the qualities that excite enthusiasm, and bind men to him. Possibly, the qualities King James possesses would be highly valued by the Scotch, but they would certainly fail to inspire our people."

"Yes," Patrick O'Neil agreed. "His father did more to ruin his cause, in Ireland, than all William's Dutch generals and troops, together. It was disheartening to be risking life and possessions for a man who would do nothing for himself, whose indecision paralysed our leaders, and who, the moment a reverse came, sought safety in flight, instead of taking his place among the men who were devoted to his cause. I can understand that, in England, where the majority of those who professed to be devoted to him were betraying him, and were in secret communication with William, he should be by turns obstinate and vacillating; but in Ireland, where every man who surrounded him was risking his life in his cause, he should have shown absolute confidence in them, listened to their advice, set an example of personal gallantry and courage, and, at least, remained among them until all was definitely lost. It was the desertion of James, rather than the loss of the battle of the Boyne, that ruined his cause.

"Well, I am glad you are out of it, for it was a pity that you should be going without your work at the *salle d'armes*, when you were making such progress that, the master reported, in a few months you would become one of the best swordsmen in the regiment."

There were, in Paris, many Irish officers besides those belonging to Colonel O'Brien's regiment. These were, for the most part, men who had been severely wounded in the preceding campaign, and who now remained in the capital with the depots of their regiments. These were constantly recruited by fresh arrivals from Ireland, by which means the Irish Brigade was not only kept up to their original strength, in spite of the heavy losses they suffered, in the engagements in which they had taken part, but largely increased its force, new regiments being constantly formed. Naturally, O'Brien's corps, being the only complete regiment in Paris, at the time, was regarded as the headquarters and general meeting place of all the Irish officers there; and, as some of these had campaigned in Flanders, in Italy, and in Spain, Desmond learned, from their talk and anecdotes, far more of the doings of the

Brigade than he had hitherto known. From the first they had, by their reckless bravery, in almost every engagement that had taken place, so distinguished themselves that they received the highest commendation from the French generals, and were almost invariably selected for specially dangerous service.

"I think the hottest affair I was ever engaged in," a major, who had served in Burke's regiment, said one evening, when some ten or twelve of his companions had gathered, at the room which was the general meeting place of the officers of the corps, "was at the attack on Cremona by Eugene. You have all heard how our regiment, and that of Dillon, distinguished themselves there, but you may not have heard particulars. The place was a strong one, and it was garrisoned by some 4000 men– all French, with the exception of our two regiments. Marshal Villeroy was himself in command; an excellent officer, but, as is often the case in the French army, very badly served by his subordinates.

"Here, as you know, almost everything goes by influence; and the generals are surrounded by men who have been forced upon them by powerful persons, whom they cannot afford to disoblige. The consequence was that, relying upon the strength of the place, no proper watch was set. There were guards, indeed, at the gates, but with no communication with each other; no soldiers on the ramparts; no patrols were sent out beyond the town, or maintained in the streets.

"No harm might have come of this, had it not been that treachery was at work. There was a scoundrel, who was brother of the priest of one of the parishes near the wall, and both were in favour of the enemy. The priest's residence was near a sewer, which communicated with the moat outside the walls. The entrance was closed by an iron grating. Were this removed, troops could enter, by the sewer, into the priest's wine cellar.

"The priest, being promised a large sum of money, set to work. First, he laid a complaint before the governor that the sewer was choked with filth, which might be a source of disease to the town unless removed; and to do this, it was necessary that the grating should be taken down. Being altogether unsuspicious of evil, the governor granted his request.

"As soon as the grating was removed, Eugene despatched eight miners, who crossed the moat at night, made their way up the sewer, and opened a communication between it and the priest's house. When all was ready, four or five hundred picked grenadiers entered, and were concealed in the house of the priest, and other adherents of the emperor.

"Eugene set two strong bodies of picked troops in motion. The one was to enter by the Saint Margaret gate, which would be seized by the force already in the city. This column consisted of five thousand men. The second force, of two thousand infantry and three thousand cavalry, under the Prince de Vaudemont, was to cross the river by a bridge of boats.

"We slept like stupid dogs. Such watchmen as there were on the walls gave no alarm. The gate of All Saints was seized, its guard being instantly overpowered, and a party of engineers broke down the gate of Saint Margaret, which had been walled up; and at daylight Eugene rode into the town, followed by his troops and one thousand cavalry; while another mounted force watched the gate, and the country round, to prevent the escape of fugitives.

"Before any alarm was given, Eugene had established himself at the Hotel de Ville, was master of the great street that separated half the garrison from the other half, had taken possession of the cathedral; and, in fact, the place was captured without a shot being fired.

"Then the uproar began. Parties of troops, led by natives of the town, seized a large number of officers at their lodgings; and as the alarm spread, the troops seized their muskets and rushed out, only to be sabred and trodden down by the enemy's cavalry. I was asleep, and dreaming, when my servant rushed into my room, and said:

"'The Germans are in possession of the town, Captain.'

"'You are a blathering idiot,' I said.

"'It's true, your honour. Get up and listen.'

"Very unwillingly, I got out of bed and opened the window, and, by the holy poker, I found that Pat was right. There was a sound of firing, shouting, and screaming, and I heard the gallop of a heavy body of horsemen, and, directly afterwards, a squadron of German cuirassiers came galloping down the street.

"'It is time for us to be out of this, Pat,' I said, and jumped into my clothes, quicker than I had ever done before.

"We went downstairs, and I borrowed two overcoats that we found hanging there, and put them on over our uniforms. Then we went out, by the back door, and ran as hard as we could, keeping through narrow lanes, to the barracks.

"On my way, I had to pass a barrier near a toll gate. Here there were thirty-six of our men under a sergeant. Not knowing where the enemy were, or whether they were between me and the barracks, I thought it best to stay there, and of course took the command. Just as I had done so, I heard the tramping of cavalry, and had the gate shut. We were just in time, for two hundred and fifty cuirassiers came galloping along.

"Their leader, Baron de Mercy, as soon as the troops began to enter Saint Margaret's gate, was ordered to dash round and capture the Po gate, through which Vaudemont's corps would, after crossing the bridge, enter the town. He shouted to me to surrender, promising us our lives. I told him that if he wanted the place, he would have to come and take it. He used language which I need not repeat, but he did not attack us, waiting for the arrival of four hundred infantry, who had been ordered to follow him. They were some time in coming up, having lost their way, owing to the rascally native who was their guide being killed by a shot from a window.

"I was not sorry for the delay, for it gave us time to look at matters quietly, and prepare for defence. Another six hundred cavalry now came up, and Mercy placed them so as to cut off, altogether, the French cavalry, who were quartered away to the right; then he ordered the infantry to attack us.

"Our position was a good one. The barricade was formed of square piles, driven into the ground with small narrow openings between them. I ordered the men to keep behind the timbers until the enemy came up. The Germans opened a murdering fire as they approached, but, though the bullets pattered like rain against the palisades, and whistled in between them, not a man was touched. I waited till they were within two paces, and then gave the word, and you may well guess that there was not a bullet thrown away, and the Germans, mightily astonished, drew back, leaving nigh forty of their men behind them. Then, falling back a bit, they opened fire upon us, but it was a game that two could play at. We could see them, but they could not see us; and while we loaded our muskets in shelter, they were exposed, and we picked them off by dozens.

"The firing had, of course, given the alarm to our two regiments, who turned out just as they were, in their nightshirts. Major O'Mahony, who was in command of Dillon's regiment, as Lally was away on leave, luckily made his way in safety from his lodgings to the barracks, got his own men in order, while Colonel Wauchop, who commanded our regiment, took the command of the two battalions. Fortunately, a portion of the regiment had been ordered to fall in early for inspection, and this gave time for the rest to get into their uniforms; and, as soon as they were ready, Wauchop led them out and fell suddenly upon a portion of Mercy's force, poured in a volley, and then charged them.

"Horse and foot fell back before the attack. Then they turned the cannon on the ramparts, and thus secured possession of the Po gate, and, pushing on, the guns helping them, drove the Austrians from the houses they occupied, and so opened communications with the French cavalry.

"A brigadier now came up, and ordered the battalions to barricade all the streets they had won, with barrels and carts. A French regiment arrived, and occupied the church of Saint Salvador, and the battery which commanded the bridge, across which Vaudemont's corps could now be seen approaching. The redoubt on the other side of the bridge was only held by fifty men, and they were now strengthened by a hundred of the French soldiers. The Austrians approached, making sure

that the town had already been taken, and looking out for a signal that was to be hoisted. Their astonishment was great, when a heavy musketry fire was opened upon them by the garrison of the outpost, while the guns of the battery on the wall plunged their shot in among them.

"The column was at once halted. Eugene had regarded the struggle as over, when news was brought to him of the defeat of Mercy's corps by the Irish. Everywhere else things had gone most favourably. Marshal Villeroy had been wounded and made prisoner. His *marechal de camp* shared the same fate. The Chevalier D'Entregues, who advanced to meet the enemy, was defeated and killed, as was Lieutenant General de Trenan, and the Spanish Governor of the town mortally wounded.

"On receiving the news, Eugene at once sent an officer to inspect the Irish position; but his report was that they were too well placed to be driven from it. He then sent Captain MacDonnell, an officer in his service, to offer, if the Irish would leave their position, to enrol them in the Austrian service, with higher pay than they now received. You may guess the sort of answer he received, and he was at once arrested for bringing such a message to them. Eugene then endeavoured to engage Marshal Villeroy to order the Irish to lay down their arms, as further resistance would only end in their slaughter. Villeroy simply replied that, as a prisoner, he could no longer give orders.

"During this pause, the Count de Revel and the Marquis de Queslin succeeded in gathering together a considerable number of the scattered French infantry, and with these they marched to endeavour to recover the gates that had been lost, and, having occupied the church of Santa Maria, and a bastion near the gate of All Saints, ordered the Irish to leave a hundred men at the barricades, and with the rest to push forward to the gate of Mantua. So I found myself in command of a full company.

"O'Mahony was now in command of the two regiments, as Wauchop had been wounded. It was pretty hard work they had of it, and they suffered heavily in carrying the guardhouse, held by two hundred Austrians. Eugene now launched a great force against our people, and attacked them on all sides; but O'Mahony faced them each way, and received the charge of the cuirassiers with so heavy a fire that they fled in disorder. Another corps of cuirassiers came up, and these charged with such fury that their leader, Monsieur de Freiberg, pushed his way into the middle of Dillon's regiment, where he was surrounded, and, refusing quarter, was killed; and his men, disheartened by the fall of their leader, fled, carrying with them the infantry who were ranged in their rear.

"But our men were now exhausted by their exertions, and suffered heavily; and O'Mahony, seeing that he was likely to be attacked by fresh troops, and that my post guarding the approach of the Po gate would then be left altogether unsupported, returned to it. I was glad enough when I saw them coming, for it was mighty trying work being left there, and hearing the storm of battle going on all round, and knowing that at any moment we might be attacked.

"They did not stop long, for orders came from Revel, who had captured the gate of All Saints, and was preparing to attack Saint Margaret's, to march again to the gate of Mantua. It seemed a hopeless enterprise. Captain Dillon, of Dillon's regiment, marched out and, after hard fighting, drove the Austrians from house to house; but, on reaching a spot where the ground was open, he was attacked on all sides, and for a time the enemy and our men were mixed up together in a melee.

"I could hear by the sound of the firing that our men were returning, and posted my fellows so as to cover their retreat; and as they came back, hotly pressed by the enemy, we opened so warm a fire that they passed in through the gate of the barrier in safety, but only half as strong as they had gone out.

"As soon as they were in, they aided us in strengthening the position. Seeing that Vaudemont's corps was on the point of attacking the redoubt, the Marquis de Queslin sent orders to the little garrison there to withdraw across the bridge, and destroy the boats. This they effected, in spite of the heavy fire kept up by the enemy.

"In the meantime, fighting had been going on all over the town. The gate of Mantua had been held by Captain Lynch, of Dillon's battalion, and thirty-five men. As soon as he heard the din of battle in the town, he collected a few fugitives, entrenched his position at the guardhouse, and maintained it

for the whole day; not only that, but, finding that his position was commanded by a party of Austrians, who had taken post in the church of Saint Marie, close by, he sallied out, drove them from the church, and maintained possession of that as well; until, late in the afternoon, he was reinforced by two companies of our regiment, who made their way this time without opposition.

"The enemy fell back, but not unmolested, as, sallying out, we pressed hotly upon them. There now remained only the gate of Saint Margaret in the hands of the Austrians. Here a large body of troops had been stationed, and succeeded in repulsing the repeated attacks made upon them by Revel's force.

"The fight had now lasted for eleven hours, and the position of the Austrians had become critical. The desperate resistance of our men had entirely changed the position. They had repulsed every attack upon them, had given time for the scattered French to gather, and the one gate remaining in Eugene's possession was seriously threatened. Vaudemont's corps was helpless on the other side of the river, and could render no assistance, and Eugene gave the order for his troops to retire, which they did in good order.

"It had been a hot day, indeed, for us, and we were only too glad to see them go. We had lost three hundred and fifty men, out of the six hundred with which we began the fight; altogether, the garrison had lost, in killed, wounded, and in prisoners, fourteen hundred men and officers, while Eugene's loss was between fifteen and sixteen hundred.

"Personally, I have had hotter fighting, but taking the day altogether, it was the most terrible through which I have ever passed. Throughout the day we were in total ignorance of what was going on elsewhere, though we knew, by the firing in other parts of the town, that the French there had not been overpowered, and, each time the regiments left us, I was expecting every moment to be attacked by an overwhelming force. Faith, it was enough to make one's hair white! However, I have no reason to grumble. I obtained great praise for the defence of the barrier, and was given my majority; and, if it had not been for the wound I received, two years ago, which incapacitated me from active service, I might now be in command of the regiment."

"Yes, indeed," another officer said. "It was truly a gallant affair; and, although our men had fought equally as well in many another engagement, it was their conduct at Cremona that attracted the greatest attention, and showed the French the value of the Brigade. I would we had always been employed in actions on which we could look back, with the same pride and pleasure, as we can upon Cremona and a long list of battles where we bore the brunt of the fighting; and never failed to be specially mentioned with praise by the general.

"The most unpleasant work that I ever did was when under Marshal de Catinat. Eight Irish battalions were sent up, in 1694, from Pignerolle into the valley of La Perouse, to oppose the Vaudois, who had always offered a vigorous resistance to the passage of our troops through their passes. They were wild mountaineers, and Huguenots to a man, who had, I believe, generations ago been forced to fly from France and take refuge in the mountains, and maintained themselves sturdily against various expeditions sent against them.

"I own the business was not at all to my taste, and many others of our officers shared my opinions. It was too much like what we remembered so bitterly at home, when William's troopers pursued our fugitives to the hills, burning, destroying, and killing, and, above all, hunting down the priests. This was the other way, but was as cruel and barbarous. The poor people had given no offence, save that they held to their own religion. An Irishman should be the last to blame another for that, and, seeing they had successfully opposed the efforts of the French to root them out, it was much against my will that I marched with my regiment. I hope that, when it comes to fighting against regular troops, of whatever nationality, I am ready to do my work; but to carry fire and sword among a quiet people, in little mountain villages, went against the grain.

"It seemed to us that it was to be a massacre rather than fighting, but there we were mistaken. It was the hardest work that I ever went through. It was impossible in such a country to move in

large bodies, and we were broken up into small parties, which advanced into the hills, each under its own commander, without any fixed plans save to destroy every habitation, to capture or kill the flocks of goats, which afforded the inhabitants their chief means of subsistence, and to give no quarter wherever they resisted.

"Even now, I shudder at the thought of the work we had to do; climbing over pathless hills, wading waist deep through mountain torrents, clambering along on the face of precipices where a false step meant death, and always exposed to a dropping fire from invisible foes, who, when we arrived at the spot from which they had fired, had vanished and taken up a fresh position, so that the whole work had to be done over again. Sometimes we were two or even more days without food, for, as you may imagine, it was impossible to transport provisions, and we had nothing save what we carried in our haversacks at starting. We had to sleep on the soaked ground, in pitiless storms. Many men were carried away and drowned in crossing the swollen torrents. Our clothes were never dry. And the worst of it was, after six weeks of such work, we felt that we were no nearer to the object for which we had been sent up than we were when we started.

"It was true that we had destroyed many of their little villages, but as these generally consisted of but a few houses, only rough buildings that could be rebuilt in a few days, the gain was not a substantial one. We had, of course, killed some of the Vaudois, but our loss had been much heavier than theirs, for, active as our men were, they were no match in speed for these mountaineers, who were as nimble as their own goats, knew everything of the country, and could appear or disappear, as it seemed to us, almost by magic. It was a wretched business, and once or twice, when our parties were caught in the narrow ravines, they were overwhelmed by rocks thrown down from above; so that, on the whole, we lost almost as many men as we should have done in a pitched battle, gaining no credit, nor having the satisfaction that we were doing good service to France.

"I hope I may never be employed in a business like that again. It was not only the Vaudois that we had to fight, for, seeing that at first we were pushing forward steadily, the Duke of Savoy, under whose protection they lived, sent six hundred regular troops to assist them, and these, who were well commanded, adopted the same tactics as the peasants, avoiding all our attempts to bring on an engagement, and never fighting except when they had us to great advantage.

"As a rule, our men were always dissatisfied when they received orders to fall back, but I think that there was not a man among us but was heartily glad, when we were recalled to rejoin Catinat at Pignerolle."

The expedition, however, although altogether unsuccessful in rooting out the Vaudois, created such terrible devastation in the mountains and valleys that the Irish name and nation will long remain odious to the Vaudois. Six generations have since passed away, but neither time nor subsequent calamities have obliterated the impression made by the waste and desolation of this military incursion.

"You were at Blenheim, were you not, Captain O'Donovan?"

"Yes. A tough fight it was, and a mismanaged one. I was in the Earl of Clare's regiment, which, with Lee and Dorrington's battalions, was stationed with the force in Oberglau in the centre of our position. It seemed to us, and to our generals, that our position was almost impregnable. It lay along a ridge, at the foot of which was a rivulet and deep swampy ground. On the right of the position was the village of Blenheim, held by twenty-seven battalions of good French infantry, twelve squadrons, and twenty-four pieces of cannon. Strong entrenchments had been thrown up round our position, but these were not altogether completed. Blenheim, moreover, had been surrounded by very heavy and strong palisades, altogether impassable by infantry, and, as the allies could not hope to get cannon across the stream and swamps, it seemed to defy any attack. From Oberglau the army of Marshal de Marcin and the Elector stretched to the village of Lutzingen. We had some five-and-twenty cannon at Oberglau.

"The weak point, as it afterwards turned out to be, was the crest between us and Blenheim. Considering that both the artillery and musketry fire from both villages swept the slope, and as in numbers we equalled the enemy, it was thought well-nigh impossible for him to cross the swamps

and advance to the attack; and almost the whole of the French cavalry were massed on the crest, in order to charge them, should they succeed in crossing and try to ascend the slope.

"At first the battle went altogether favourably. We had opposite to us the English, Dutch, Hanoverians, and Danish troops under Marlborough, while facing our left were Prussians, Imperialists, and other German troops under Eugene. Marlborough's Danish and Hanoverian cavalry first crossed, but were at once charged and driven back. Then they tried again, supported by English infantry. Then Marlborough led up a still stronger force, drove back our light cavalry, and began to ascend the hill. We were attacked by ten battalions–Hanoverians, Danes, and Prussians, while the English bore against Blenheim. The fighting at both places was desperate, and I must do the Germans the justice to say that nothing could have exceeded the gallantry they showed, and that, in spite of the heavy fire we maintained, they pressed up the slope.

"We remained in our entrenchments, till it could be seen that the English were falling back from Blenheim, whose palisade, manned by twenty-seven battalions of infantry, offered an obstacle that would have defied the best troops in the world to penetrate.

"Immediately this was seen, nine battalions, headed by our three regiments, leapt from the trenches and poured down on the Germans. The enemy could not withstand our onslaught. Two of their regiments were utterly destroyed, the rest suffered terribly, and were driven back. On the left, Marcin held his ground against all the attacks of Eugene, and it seemed to us that the battle was won.

"However, it was not over yet. While the fierce fighting had been going on in front of Oberglau and Blenheim, Marlborough had passed the whole of his cavalry and the rest of his infantry across the rivulet, and, in spite of artillery and musketry fire, these moved up in grand order, the infantry inclining towards the two villages as before, the cavalry bearing straight up the slope, and, when they reached the crest, charging furiously upon our horse stationed there. They were superior in numbers, but on this head accounts differ. At any rate, they overthrew our cavalry, who fled in the greatest disorder, pursued by the allied horse.

"The infantry poured into the gap thus made, Blenheim was entirely isolated, and we were exposed to assault both in front and rear. Nevertheless, we repulsed all attacks, until Marcin sent orders for us to retire; then we sallied out, after setting fire to the village, flung ourselves upon the enemy, and succeeded in cutting our way through, our regiment forming the rear guard. The whole of Marcin's army were now in full retreat, harassed by the allied cavalry; but whenever their squadrons approached us, we faced about and gave them so warm a reception that they attacked less formidable foes. As for the garrison in Blenheim, you know they were at last surrounded by Marlborough's whole force, with artillery; and with the Danube in their rear, and no prospect of succour, they were forced to surrender.

"It was a disastrous day, and I have not yet recovered from the wound I received there. Had five thousand infantry been posted in a redoubt, halfway between Blenheim and Oberglau, so as to give support to our cavalry, the result of the battle would have been very different. Still, I suppose that most battles are lost by some unlooked-for accident–some mistake in posting the troops. We can only say that, had the allied forces been all composed of such troops as those Eugene commanded, they would have been beaten decisively; and that had, on the contrary, Eugene commanded such troops as those under Marlborough, Marcin would never have held his ground."

"How many British troops were there in the battle, Captain O'Donovan?"

"Somewhere about twelve thousand, while the Continental troops were forty-seven or forty-eight thousand. There is no doubt that they were the backbone of the force, just as we flatter ourselves that our three regiments were the backbone of the defence of Oberglau."

Chapter 3: A Strange Adventure

When the party broke up, O'Neil and O'Sullivan, as usual, came in for a quiet chat to Desmond's room.

"As we may be possibly ordered to Spain," Kennedy said, "I should like to know a little about what we are going to fight about; for, although I know a good deal about the war in Flanders, no news about that in Spain ever reached Kilkargan."

"Well, you know, of course," O'Neil said, "that Philip the Fifth is a grandson of Louis; and is naturally supported by France against the Archduke Charles of Austria, who is competitor for the throne, and who is, of course, supported by England. Six thousand English and Dutch troops were sent to aid the Archduke Charles in his attempt to invade Spain and dethrone Philip. The King of Portugal, who is a member of the allied confederacy, promised to have everything ready to cooperate with them. They found, however, on their arrival, that no preparations had been made, and they were accordingly distributed, for a time, among the garrisons on the frontier.

"Philip, on his part, had not been so inactive, and two armies–the one commanded by the Duke of Berwick, and the other by General Villadarias–invaded Portugal. Berwick surprised and captured two Dutch battalions, and then captured Portalagre, and compelled the garrison, including an English regiment of infantry, to surrender.

"The allies, to make a diversion, sent General Das Minas into Spain, with fifteen thousand men, who captured one or two towns and defeated a body of French and Spanish troops. The hot weather now set in, and put a stop to hostilities, and the troops on both sides went into quarters. The general–I forget his name–who commanded the English and Dutch contingent, was so disgusted with the proceedings of the Portuguese that he resigned his command, and the Earl of Galway was appointed in his place. The next year he crossed the frontier, captured several towns, without much fighting, and invested Badajos. Here, however, a stern resistance was met with. Galway's hand was carried off by a shot, and the French general (Tesse) coming up in force to the relief of the town, and the Portuguese not arriving at all, the allies were obliged to fall back upon Portugal. But Philip was threatened from a fresh quarter.

"In June, the Earl of Peterborough sailed from Portsmouth with five thousand men, and at Lisbon took on board the Archduke Charles. At Gibraltar some more troops were embarked, and Peterborough set sail for the coast of Valencia. Peterborough himself, one of the most daring of men, and possessed of extraordinary military talent, was in favour of a march upon Madrid; but, fortunately for us, he was overruled, and commenced the siege of Barcelona–a strong town garrisoned by five thousand good troops, while he himself had but a thousand more under his command. Nevertheless, by a sudden and daring attack he captured the strong castle of Montjuich, which commanded the town, which was in consequence obliged to surrender four days later, and the whole of Catalonia was then captured. Saint Matteo, ninety miles from Barcelona, which had declared for Charles and was besieged by a large force, was relieved; and so brilliant were the exploits accomplished by Peterborough, with most inadequate means, that the Spaniards came to the conclusion that he was possessed by an evil spirit.

"Large reinforcements were sent from France, and King Philip advanced upon Barcelona, and invested it by land, while a French fleet bombarded it by sea. Peterborough hurried, with a small force from Valencia, to aid the besieged, the matter being all the more important since Charles himself was in the city. Before his arrival, however, an English fleet appeared, and our fleet retired.

"Philip at once raised the siege, and retired to Madrid. His position was indeed serious. Lord Galway was advancing from the frontier, and Peterborough had gathered a force to cooperate with him. Upon the approach of Galway, Philip and the Duke of Berwick retreated to the frontier. There

they received great reinforcements, and advanced against Madrid, which was evacuated by Galway, who marched away to form a junction with Lord Peterborough.

"Owing to the dilatory habits and hesitation of the Austrian prince, the junction was not effected for some time, and then, in spite of the entreaties of the two English generals, he could not be persuaded to make a movement towards Madrid. Peterborough, whose temper was extremely fiery, at last lost all patience, abused Charles openly, and then, mounting his horse, rode down to the coast, embarked upon an English ship of war, and sailed away to assist the Duke of Savoy. After his departure, the ill feeling between the English force, the Portuguese, and the leaders of the Spanish adherents of Charles increased, and they spent their time in quarrelling among themselves. They were without money, magazines, and almost without provisions. Berwick was near them with a superior force, and they took the only step open, of retreating towards Valencia, which they reached, after suffering great hardships, before Berwick could overtake them.

"French troops were poured into Spain, while no reinforcements were sent from England. Galway and the Portuguese advanced to meet the Duke of Berwick, who was marching with a large army to occupy Catalonia.

"The two forces met, on the plain of Almanza, on the 24th of April. We and the Spaniards were superior in number to the English, Dutch, and Portuguese. The battle was maintained for six hours. The Portuguese infantry did little, but the English and Dutch repulsed charge after charge, even after the Portuguese and Spanish allies on both wings were defeated. But, in the end, victory remained with us. Galway and Das Minas, the Portuguese general, were both wounded, and five thousand of their men killed, and yet the Dutch and English infantry held together.

"But on the following day, being absolutely without supplies, some effected their escape and succeeded in reaching Portugal, while the main body surrendered. Valencia, Saragossa, and other towns opened their gates to us, and, for a time, the cause of the Archduke Charles seemed lost.

"Our success was, however, balanced by the loss, in the same year, of the whole of the Spanish possessions in Italy. As yet, in spite of the disasters that had befallen him, the cause of Charles was not altogether lost, for he received fresh promises of support from England, whose interest it was to continue the war in Spain, and thus compel France to keep a considerable body of troops there, instead of employing them against Marlborough in Flanders.

"Galway and Das Minas were taken back to Portugal, in an English fleet, after their disaster, and General Stanhope, who, they say, is an officer of great military experience and talent, has been sent out to take the command; and as a portion of Catalonia is still held for Charles, there may yet be a good deal of hard fighting, before the matter can be considered finally settled."

"Thank you, O'Neil. I feel that I know something about it, now. Are there any of our regiments there?"

"Yes, three of them. There is also an Irish regiment in the Spanish service, under Colonel Crofton;" and with this, the talk ended for the night.

After three months' work Desmond was dismissed from drill, and had obtained such a proficiency with the rapier that he felt that he could now relax his work, and see something of the city, which he had been hitherto too busy to explore. He had seen the principal streets, in the company of his comrades, had admired the mansions of the nobles, the richness of the goods exposed to view in the windows, and the gaiety and magnificence of the dresses of the upper class. His friends had warned him that, if he intended to go farther, he should never do so alone, but should take with him his soldier servant, a trooper named Mike Callaghan.

Mike was some twenty-eight years old, strong and bony; his hair was red, and the natural colour of his face was obscured by a host of freckles; his eyes were blue, and his nose had an upward turn; his expression was merry and good humoured, but there was a twinkle about his eyes that seemed to show that he was by no means wanting in shrewdness.

"Even in the daytime," O'Neil said, "it is not safe for a man, if well dressed and likely to carry money in his pocket, to go into some quarters of the town. Paris has always been a turbulent city, and, while it is the abode of the richest and noblest of Frenchmen, it is also the resort of the rascaldom of all France. Some streets are such that even the city guard would not venture to search for an ill doer, unless in considerable force and prepared for battle. There are, of course, many streets, both on this and the other side of the river, where life and property are as safe as in the Rue Royal; which, by the way, is not saying much, for it was only three days ago that a man was assassinated there in broad daylight. He was a captain in the Picardy regiment, and it was supposed that his murderer was a man who had been dismissed from the regiment with ignominy. But, whoever it was, he has got clear away, for your Parisian citizen takes good care not to interfere in such matters, and no one thought of laying hands on the villain, although it is said he walked quietly off.

"It is in the streets that I am speaking of that adventures may most easily be met with. Here there are too many hotels of the nobles, with their numerous retainers, for it to be safe to commit crime, and the city guard are generally on the alert, for, were harm to come to one of the gentlemen attached to the great houses, the matter would be represented to the king, and the city authorities would come in for a sharp reproof for their failure to keep order in the city; whereas, anything that happens among the bourgeois would pass wholly without notice. However, if you keep out of the wine shops, you are not likely to become involved in trouble. Nine-tenths of the quarrels and tumults originate there. There is a dispute, perhaps, between a soldier and a citizen, or between soldiers of different regiments, and in a minute or two twenty swords are drawn, and the disturbance grows, sometimes, until it is necessary to call out troops from the nearest barracks to suppress it. However, I know that you are not likely to get into trouble that way, for you are a very model of moderation, to the corps."

"I have seen enough of the consequences of drink in Ireland," Desmond said, "to cure me of any desire for liquor, even had I a love for it. Faction fights, involving the people of the whole barony, arising from some drunken brawl, are common enough; while among the better class duels are common and, for the most part, are the result of some foolish quarrel between two men heated by wine. Besides, even putting that aside, I should have given up the habit. When I joined the regiment, I was anxious to become a good swordsman, but if one's head is overheated at night, one's hand would be unsteady and one's nerves shaken in the morning.

"Possibly," he added, with a smile, "it is this, quite as much as the hotness of their temper, that prevents the best teachers from caring to undertake the tuition of the officers of the Brigade."

"Possibly," Phelim laughed, "though I never thought of it before. There is no doubt that the French, who, whatever their faults be, are far less given to exceeding a fair allowance of wine than are our countrymen, would come to their morning lessons in the saloon in a better condition to profit by the advice of the master than many of our men."

"I don't think," Patrick O'Neil said, "that we Irishmen drink from any particular love of liquor, but from good fellowship and joviality. One can hardly imagine a party of French nobles inflaming themselves with wine, and singing, as our fellows do. Frenchmen are gay in what I may call a feeble way–there is no go in it. There is no spirit in their songs, there is no real heartiness in their joviality, and the idea of one man playing a practical joke upon another, the latter taking it in good part, could never enter their heads, for they are ready to take offence at the merest trifle.

"As you know, there are certain cabarets told off for the use of the soldiers of the Brigade. They are allowed to use no others, and no French troops are allowed to enter these wine shops. Similarly, there are certain establishments which are almost exclusively patronized by officers of the Brigade. There is, of course, no absolute rule here, and we can enter any cabaret we choose; but it is understood that it is at our own risk, and that, if we get into trouble there, we are sure to be handled over the coals pretty sharply, as it is considered that we must deliberately have gone there with the intention of picking a quarrel. The cabarets used by the men are all close to the barracks, so that, in case of a

fracas, a guard is sent down to bring all concerned in it back to the barracks. Fortunately, there is no need for the places we frequent being so close to the barracks, for it is understood that anyone who takes too much liquor, outside his own quarters, brings discredit on the regiment; and it is after we adjourn to the rooms of one or other of us that liquor begins to flow freely, and we make a night of it."

"Don't you ever have quarrels among yourselves?"

"Angry words pass, sometimes, but all present interfere at once. The honour of the regiment is the first point with us all. If men want to quarrel, there are plenty of French officers who would be quite ready to oblige them, but a quarrel among ourselves would be regarded as discreditable to the corps. Consequently, a dispute is always stopped before it reaches a dangerous point, and if it goes further than usual, the parties are sent for by the colonel in the morning, both get heavily wigged, and the colonel insists upon the matter being dropped, altogether. As the blood has had time to cool, both are always ready to obey his orders, especially as they know that he would report them at once to the general, if the matter were carried further."

"Well, I shall certainly not be likely to get into a quarrel over wine," Desmond said, "nor indeed, in any other way, unless I am absolutely forced into it. As to adventures such as you speak of, I am still less likely to be concerned in them. I hope that, when we are ordered on service, I shall have a full share of adventures such as may become a soldier."

O'Neil smiled. "Time will show," he said. "Adventures come without being sought, and you may find yourself in the thick of one, before you have an idea of what you are doing. But mind, if you do get into any adventure and need assistance, you are bound to let us help you. That is the compact we made, two months ago. We agreed to stand by each other, to be good comrades, to share our last sous, and naturally to give mutual aid under all and every circumstance."

Desmond nodded.

"At any rate, O'Neil, adventures cannot be so common as you represent, since neither of you, so far, has called upon me for aid or assistance."

"Have you heard the last piece of court scandal, Kennedy?" O'Sullivan asked, as the three friends sat down to breakfast together, a few days later.

"No; what is it?"

"Well, it is said that a certain damsel–her name is, at present, a secret–has disappeared."

"There is nothing very strange about that," O'Neil laughed. "Damsels do occasionally disappear. Sometimes they have taken their fate into their own hands, and gone off with someone they like better than the man their father has chosen for them; sometimes, again, they are popped into a convent for contumacy. Well, go on, O'Sullivan, that cannot be all."

"Well, it is all that seems to be certain. You know that I went with the colonel, last night, to a ball at the Hotel de Rohan, and nothing else was talked about. Several there returned from Versailles in the afternoon, and came back full of it. All sorts of versions are current. That she is a rich heiress goes without saying. If she had not been, her disappearance would have excited no attention whatever. So we may take it that she is an heiress of noble family. Some say that her father had chosen, as her husband, a man she disliked exceedingly, and that she has probably taken refuge in a convent. Some think that she has been carried off bodily, by someone smitten both by her charms and her fortune. It is certain that the king has interested himself much in the matter, and expresses the greatest indignation. Though, as it would not seem that she is a royal ward, it is not clear why he should concern himself over it. Some whisper that the king's anger is but feigned, and that the girl has been carried off by one of his favourites."

"Why should such a thing as that be supposed?" Desmond asked, indignantly.

"Well, there is something in support of the idea. If anyone else were to steal away, with or without her consent, a young lady of the court with influential friends, he would be likely to pass the first two years of his married life in one of the royal prisons; and therefore none but a desperate man, or one so secure of the king's favour as to feel certain that no evil consequences would befall him,

would venture upon such a step. You must remember that there are not a few nobles of the court who have ruined themselves, to keep up the lavish expenditure incumbent upon those who bask in the royal favour at Versailles. It would be possible that His Majesty may have endeavoured to obtain the hand of this young lady for one of his favourites, and that her father may be a noble of sufficient consequence to hold his own, and to express to His Majesty his regret that he was unable to adopt his recommendation, as he had other views for the disposal of her hand.

"The real singularity of the matter is, that no one can tell with certainty who the missing lady is. Early in the day half a dozen were named, but as I believe all of these put in an appearance at the reception in the afternoon, it is evident that, so far as they were concerned, there were no foundations for the rumour. It may be taken for certain, however, that her friends are powerful people, to have been able to impose silence upon those acquainted with the facts."

"Well, it is impossible to take very much interest in the story," Desmond said carelessly, "when we are in ignorance of the very name of the lady, and of the important point, whether she has voluntarily gone away either with a lover or to a convent, or whether she has been carried off against her will. If the latter, you were talking of adventures, O'Neil, and this would be just the sort of adventure that I should like; for us three to discover the maiden, and rescue her from her abductor."

The others both laughed loudly.

"And this is the young officer who, the other day, declared that he wished for no adventures save those that came in the course of a campaign, and now he is declaring that he would like to become a very knight errant, and go about rescuing damsels in distress!"

"I have no idea of carrying it into execution," Desmond said. "It was merely an expression of a wish. Of course, if the lady in question went willingly and to avoid persecution, I would rather help than hinder her; but if she has been carried off by some ruined courtier, nothing would please me better than to rescue her from him."

Several days had passed, and at last it was confidently believed that the missing lady was the daughter of Baron Pointdexter, a magnate of Languedoc, who had but recently come up to court, on an intimation from the king that it was a long time since he had been seen there, and that His Majesty hoped that he would be accompanied by his daughter, of whose beauty reports had reached him. It was certain that neither she nor her father had attended any of the receptions or fetes at Versailles, since the rumour first spread, although the baron had had a private interview with the king a few hours afterwards, and had left his chamber with a frowning brow, that showed that the interview had not been a pleasant one. He had not again appeared at court, whether in consequence of the royal command, or not, no one knew.

The baron was one of the richest proprietors in the south of France. He was a specimen of the best type of the French nobles, preferring to spend his time among his own wide estates to coming up to the capital, where his visits had at all times been rare.

During the daytime, Desmond went out but little. When the hours of drill and exercise were over, he spent some time in visiting the quarters of the men of his company, making their personal acquaintance, and chatting freely with them. They were glad to hear from him about their native country; and, as some of them came from his own neighbourhood, they took a lively interest in the news–the first that had reached them for years–of families with whom they were acquainted. He spent two or three hours in the afternoons in the *salle d'armes* of the regiment, or at the schools of one or other of the *maitres d'armes* most in vogue, and then paid visits, with one or other of the officers of the regiment, to great houses of which they had the entree.

Of an evening he went out, accompanied by Mike Callaghan, and wandered about the less fashionable part of the town, which pleased him better than the more crowded and busy quarters.

One evening, he had gone farther than usual, had passed through the gates, and had followed the road by the banks of the river. As an officer in uniform, he was able to re-enter the town after the

gates were closed, the rules being by no means strict, as, during the reign of Louis the 14th, France, though engaged in frequent wars abroad, was free from domestic troubles.

Presently, he passed a lonely house of some size, standing back from the road and surrounded by a high wall. As he did so, he heard a scream in a female voice, followed by angry exclamations from two male voices, while loudly rose a woman's cries for help.

"There is bad work of some sort going on in there," he said to Mike. "We had better see what it is all about. Do you go round the wall by the right, and I will go round by the left, and see if there is any way by which we can climb over."

They met at the back of the house. The wall was unbroken, save by the gates in front.

"The wall is too high for us to climb, Mike," Desmond said. "Even if I stood on your head, I could not reach the top. Let us go round to the front again."

They returned, and closely scrutinized the gate. It was not so high as the wall itself, but was fully twelve feet.

"I have got a pistol with me, your honour," Mike said. "I have seen doors blown in, by firing a gun through the keyhole."

"That would do, if we were sure that there were no bars, Mike; but the chances are that it is barred, as well as locked. Besides, I am sure that we should not be justified in blowing in the door of a private house. It may be that they were the cries of a mad woman. I would rather get over as quietly as possible."

"Well, sir, I will stand against it, and if you will get on to my shoulders and put your foot on my head, you will reach the top. Then, if you lower one end of your sash to me, I can pull myself up beside you."

"Yes, I think we can manage it that way, Mike. I am convinced that there is something wrong going on here, and I don't mind taking the risk of getting into a scrape by interfering. Now do you stoop a bit, so that I can get on to your shoulder; then you can raise yourself to your full height. Take off your hat, first. I shall certainly have to put my foot on your head."

"All right, your honour. Don't you be afraid of hurting me. My skull is thick enough to stand the weight of two of you."

In a minute, Desmond had his fingers on the top of the gates, drew himself up, and, moving to the corner, where he could get his back against the end of the wall, lowered his sash to Mike.

"You are sure I shall not pull you down?"

"I am not sure, but we will try, anyhow."

This was said in a whisper, for there might, for anything he knew, be two or three men in the garden. Mike took off his boots, so as to avoid making a noise. Desmond was sitting astride of the gate, and had his end of the sash over the top of it, and under his leg, thereby greatly reducing the strain that would be thrown on it, and then leaning with all his weight on it, where it crossed the gate. Mike was an active as well as a strong man, and speedily was by his side.

"Now we will drop down," Desmond said, and, setting the example, lowered himself till he hung by his hands, and then dropped. Mike was soon beside him.

"What shall we do next?"

"We will go and knock boldly at the door; but before we do that, we will unbar the gate and shoot the bolt of the lock. We have no idea how many men there may be in the house. Maybe we shall have to beat a retreat."

The lock was shot without difficulty, but the bolts were still fast, and were not drawn without noise. They pushed back the last of these, and then opened the gates, which creaked noisily as they did so.

"They can hardly help hearing that," Desmond muttered; and indeed, as he spoke, the door of the house opened suddenly, and five men came out, two of them holding torches. A man, who

seemed to be the leader of the party, uttered an exclamation of fury as the light fell upon the figures of the two men at the open gate.

"Cut the villains down!" he shouted.

"Stop!" Desmond cried, in a loud voice. "I am an officer of O'Brien's regiment of foot. I heard a scream, and a woman's cry for help, and, fearing that foul play was going on, I made my entry here."

The man, who had drawn his sword, paused.

"You have done wrong, sir. The cries you heard were those of a mad woman. You had better withdraw at once. I shall report you, tomorrow, for having forcibly made an entrance into private premises."

"That you are perfectly at liberty to do," Desmond replied quietly; "but certainly I shall not withdraw, until I see this lady, and ascertain from herself whether your story is a true one."

"Then your blood be on your own head!" the man said.

"At them, men! you know your orders–to kill anyone who attempted to interfere with us, no matter what his rank."

The five men rushed together upon the intruders.

"Hold the gate, Mike," Desmond said, "and they cannot get behind us."

They stepped back a pace or two, and drew their swords. The position was a favourable one, for the two halves of the gate opened inwards, and so protected them from any but an attack in front. The leader rushed at Desmond, but the latter guarded the sweeping blow he dealt at him, and at the first pass ran him through the body; but the other four men, enraged rather than daunted by the fall of their leader, now rushed forward together, and one of them, drawing a pistol, fired at Desmond when within three paces.

The latter threw his head on one side, as he saw the pistol levelled. The action saved his life, for it was well aimed, and the bullet would have struck him full between the eyes. As it was, he felt a sharp sudden pain, as it grazed his cheek deeply. He sprang forward, and before the man could drop the pistol and change his sword from the left hand to the right, Desmond's weapon pierced his throat. At the same moment, Mike cut down one of his assailants with his sabre, receiving, however, a severe cut on the left shoulder from the other.

Paralysed at the loss of three of their number, the remaining two of the assailants paused, for a moment. It was fatal to one of them, for Mike snatched his pistol from his pocket, and shot the man who had wounded him, dead. The other threw down his sword, and fell upon his knees, crying for mercy.

"Shall I kill him, your honour?"

"No. Fasten his hands behind him, with his own belt; and bind his ankles tightly together, with that of one of his comrades."

He paused, while Mike adroitly carried out his instructions.

"Now we will see what this is all about," Desmond said. "I don't suppose that there are any more of them in the house. Still, we may as well keep our swords in readiness."

Picking up one of the torches that had fallen from their assailants' hands, and holding it above his head with his left hand, while his right held his sword ready for action, Desmond entered the house. The sitting rooms on both sides of the hall were empty, but, upon entering the kitchen, he found an old woman crouching in a corner, in the extremity of fear.

"Stand up. I am not going to hurt you," Desmond said. "Lead us, at once, to the chamber of the lady we heard call out."

The old woman rose slowly, took down a key hanging from a peg, and, leading the way upstairs, opened a door.

"Keep a watch upon the crone," Desmond said, as he entered.

As he did so, his eye fell upon a girl of some seventeen years old. She was standing at the window, with her hands clasped. She turned round as he entered, and, as her eye fell upon his uniform, she gave a cry of delight.

"Ah, monsieur, you have rescued me! I heard the fight in the garden, and knew that the good God had sent someone to my aid. But you are wounded, sir. Your face is streaming with blood."

"'Tis but the graze of a pistol ball," he said, "and needs but a bowl of water, and a strip of plaster, to put it right. I had well-nigh forgotten it.

"I am glad, indeed, to have been able to render you this service, mademoiselle. It was most providential that I happened to come along the road, and heard your screams and cries for aid; and I determined to see if any foul business was being carried on here. What made you call out?"

"I had let myself down from the window, by knotting the bedclothes together. I was blindfolded, when they carried me in here, and did not know that the walls were so high all round, but had hoped to find some gate by which I might escape. There were only the great gates, and these were locked; and I was trying to draw the bolts when two of the men suddenly rushed out. I suppose the old woman came up here, and found the room empty. It was then that I screamed for help, but they dragged me in, in spite of my struggles, and one said I might scream as much as I liked, for there was not a house within hearing, and no one would be passing anywhere near.

"When he said that, I quite gave up hope. I had believed that I was in some lonely house, in the suburbs of the city, and I little thought that my cries could not be heard.

"But where are the men who guarded me?"

"Four of them are dead, mademoiselle, and the other securely bound. Now, if you will tell me who you are, and where your friends live, I and my soldier servant will escort you to them."

"My name is Anne de Pointdexter."

Desmond was scarcely surprised, for the care which had been taken in choosing so lonely a spot for her concealment, and the fact that an officer and four men should be placed there to guard her, showed that she must have been regarded as a prisoner of importance.

"Then I am glad, indeed, to have been the means of rescuing you. All Paris has been talking of your disappearance, for the past ten days. The question is, what would you wish done? It is too far to take you to Versailles tonight, and too late to obtain means of conveyance."

"There is a carriage in the stables behind the house, and there are some horses. I cannot say how many, but at night I have heard them stamping. I suppose the carriage was left here so that they could remove me to some other place, in case suspicion should fall upon this house. How many are there of you, monsieur?"

"Only myself, and the trooper you see at the door."

"And did you two fight with five men, and kill four of them!" she exclaimed, in surprise. "How brave of you, monsieur, and how good to run such risk, for a person of whom you knew nothing!"

"I knew that it was a woman in distress," Desmond said, "and that was quite enough to induce two Irishmen to step in, and answer to her cry for aid. However, mademoiselle, if the carriage and horses are there, this will get us out of our difficulty. The only question is, will you start at once, or wait until daylight? We may be stopped by the patrols, as we approach Versailles, but I have no doubt that my uniform will suffice to pass us into the town, where probably your father is still lodging."

"I would much rather go at once," the girl said. "There are others who come, sometimes at all hours of the night."

"Very well, then, we will see about getting the carriage ready, at once. If you will come downstairs, we will lock this old woman up in your room."

This was done at once, and the girl, who was so shaken by her captivity that she feared to remain for a moment by herself, accompanied her rescuers to the back of the house. Here, as she had said, they found a carriage and four horses, two of which stood ready saddled, while the others were evidently carriage horses. These were speedily harnessed, and put into the carriage.

"Now, Mike, you had better drive. I will mount one of these saddle horses and ride alongside. I think, mademoiselle, as the drive will be a long one, it would be as well that we should put the old woman in the carriage with you. She will be a companion, though one that you would not take from choice. Still, your father may wish to question her, and, indeed, it would be better in many respects that you should have a female with you."

"Thank you, Monsieur Kennedy,"–for she had already learned his name–she said gratefully, "it would certainly be much better."

The old woman was therefore brought down, and made to enter the carriage, and seat herself facing Mademoiselle Pointdexter. Mike took his seat on the box, and Desmond mounted one of the saddle horses, and led the other. They had already removed the bodies that lay in front of the gates.

They had to make a considerable detour round Paris, before they came down upon the Versailles road. The roads were bad and the carriage was heavy, and daylight was already breaking when they entered the town. They had twice been stopped by patrols, but Desmond's uniform had sufficed to pass them.

Baron Pointdexter had taken up his abode in a large house, standing in a walled garden in the lower part of the town. When they reached it, Desmond dismounted and rung the bell. After he had done this several times, a step was heard in the garden, and a voice asked roughly, "Who is it that rings at this hour of the morning?"

Mademoiselle Pointdexter, who had alighted as soon as the carriage stopped, called out, "It is I, Eustace."

There was an exclamation of surprise and joy, bolts were at once drawn, and the gate thrown open, and an old servitor threw himself on his knees as the girl entered, and, taking the hand she held out to him, put it to his lips.

"Ah, mademoiselle," he said, while the tears streamed down his cheeks, "what a joyful morning it is! We have all suffered, and monsieur le baron most of all. He has spoken but a few words, since you left, but walks up and down the garden as one distraught, muttering to himself, and sometimes even drawing his sword and thrusting it at an invisible enemy. He is up, mademoiselle. He has never gone to his bed since you were missing."

As he spoke, the door of the house opened, and the baron hurried out, with the question, "What is it, Eustace?"

Then, as his eye fell on his daughter, he gave a hoarse cry, and for a moment swayed, as if he would have fallen. His daughter ran up to him, and threw her arms round his neck.

"Do you return to me safe and well?" he asked, as, after a long embrace, he stepped back and gazed into her face.

"Quite safe and well, father."

"The Lord be praised!" the baron exclaimed, and, dropping into a garden seat by his side, he burst into a passion of sobbing.

As soon as he had appeared, Desmond had handed over the old woman to Eustace.

"She is a prisoner–keep a watch over her," he said. "She can tell much. We will take the carriage round to a stable, and must then return at once to Paris, where I must be on duty at seven. Please inform the baron that I shall do myself the honour of calling, tomorrow, to enquire whether Mademoiselle Pointdexter has suffered from the effects of the fatigue and excitement. Express my regret that I am obliged to leave at once, but I am sure he will have so much to hear, from his daughter, that it is best they should be alone together, for a time."

He at once remounted his horse, Mike climbed up on to his seat, and they drove off, and, knocking up the people at some large stables, left the carriage and horses there, telling the proprietors to send to the Baron Pointdexter to know his wishes regarding it. Then Mike mounted the spare horse, and they started at full speed for Paris, and arrived at the barracks in time for Desmond to take his place at the early parade.

Chapter 4: At Versailles

The regiment was on the point of falling in, on the parade ground, when Desmond Kennedy rode up. Leaping from his horse, he threw the reins to his servant.

"Take them both round to the stables, and put them in spare stalls, Mike. I will get leave off parade for both of us, and ask the surgeon to dress your wounds properly."

Then he went up to the colonel, who was just entering the barrack yard.

"Colonel O'Brien," he said, "I must ask your leave off parade, for, as you see, I am scarcely in a condition to take my place with my company."

"So it would seem, Mr. Kennedy. You have been in trouble, I see. Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Nothing at all, sir, as far as I am concerned. It is merely a graze from a pistol ball."

"Well, I must hear about it, afterwards."

"I must also ask leave off parade for Callaghan, my servant, sir. He is hurt a good deal more than I am, though not, I hope, seriously."

The colonel nodded. "I will send the surgeon to your quarters, and he will see to you both."

As Desmond left the colonel, his two chums came up.

"Why, Kennedy, what on earth have you been doing to yourself? This is what comes of gallivanting about after dark. When we came round, yesterday evening, to go out with you as usual, you were not in. There was nothing very unusual in that, for these evening walks of yours are often prolonged; but we called again, on our return at eleven o'clock, and found you were still absent. This looked serious. We came round again at six this morning, for we were anxious about you, and learned you had not been in all night, and, on enquiring, heard that Callaghan was also absent.

"That was cheering. That you might get into some scrape or other, we could reasonably believe; but, as you had your man with you, we could hardly suppose that misfortune had fallen upon both of you."

"The wound is a mere graze. I will tell you, after parade, what I have been doing," Desmond said, "but you must nurse your curiosity till you are dismissed."

A few minutes after Desmond reached his quarters, the surgeon came in.

"I do not think that I have any need of your services, doctor. I got a piece of plaster, and stuck it on two hours ago, and I have no doubt that the wound will heal in a few days."

"However, I will, with your permission, take it off, Mr. Kennedy. It is much better that the wound should be properly washed, and some dressing applied to it. It will heal all the quicker, and you are less likely to have an ugly scar.

"It is a pretty deep graze," he said, after he had carefully removed the plaster. "An eighth of an inch farther, and it would have made your teeth rattle. You had better keep quiet, today. Tomorrow morning, if there is no sign of inflammation, I will take off the dressing and bandage and put on a plaster–one a third of the size that I took off will be sufficient; and as I will use a pink plaster, it will not be very noticeable, if you go outside the barracks.

"Where is your man? The colonel told me there were two patients.

"A nasty cut," he said, after examining Mike's wound. "It is lucky that it was not a little higher. If it had been, you would have bled to death in five minutes. As it is, it is not serious. You will have to keep your arm in a sling for a fortnight. You are not to attend parade, or mount a horse, until I give you leave."

On the ride from Versailles, Desmond had warned Mike to say no word as to the events of the night.

"I do not know what course the young lady's father may take," he said, "and until I do, the matter had better be kept a secret, altogether."

"I will keep a quiet tongue in my head, and no one shall hear anything, from me, as to how I got this slice on my shoulder. I will just say that it was a bit of a scrimmage I got into, with two or three of the street rascals; and the thing is so common that no one is likely to ask any further questions about it."

After the parade was over, O'Neil and O'Sullivan came up to Desmond's quarters.

"Now, Master Kennedy, we have come to receive your confession. We gave you credit for being a quiet, decent boy, and now it seems that you and that man of yours have been engaged in some disreputable riot, out all night, and coming in on two strange horses, which, for aught we know, have been carried off by force of arms."

Desmond laughed.

"As to the horses, you are not so far wrong as one might expect, O'Neil. We rode them this morning from Versailles."

"From Versailles!" O'Neil repeated. "And what, in the name of all the saints, took you to Versailles! I am afraid, Desmond, that you are falling into very evil courses.

"Well, tell us all about it. I shall be glad to be able to believe that there is some redeeming feature in this strange business."

Desmond laughed, and then said, more seriously, "Well, I have had an adventure. Other people were concerned in it, as well as myself. I have made up my mind to tell you both, because I know that I can depend upon your promises to keep it an absolute secret."

"This sounds mysterious indeed," O'Sullivan said. "However, you have our promises. O'Neil and I will be as silent as the grave."

"Well, then, you know how you were chaffing me, the other day, about finding Mademoiselle Pointdexter?"

"You don't mean to say that you have found her, Kennedy?" O'Neil exclaimed incredulously.

"That is what I mean to say, though found is hardly the word, since I was not looking for her, or even thinking of her, at the time. Still, in point of fact, I accidentally came across the place where she was hidden away, and after a sharp skirmish, in which Callaghan and I each had to kill two men, we carried her off, and delivered her safely to her father this morning."

The two young officers looked hard at Desmond, to discover if he was speaking seriously, for his tone was so quiet, and matter of fact, that they could scarce credit that he had passed through such an exciting adventure; and the three were so accustomed to hoax each other, that it struck them both as simply an invention on the part of their comrade, so absolutely improbable did it seem to them.

"Sure you are trying to hoax us, Kennedy," O'Sullivan said.

"You could not blame me, if I were," Desmond said, with a smile, "considering the cock-and-bull stories that you are constantly trying to palm off on me. However, you are wrong now. I will tell you the affair, just as it happened."

And he related, in detail, the story of the rescue of Mademoiselle Pointdexter, and the manner in which he had conveyed her to Versailles.

"By Saint Bridget, Kennedy, we were not far wrong when we called you a knight errant. Well, this is something like an adventure, though whether it will end well or ill for you I cannot say. Did you learn the name of the person who had the girl carried off?"

"No. I asked no questions, and indeed had but little conversation with her; for, as I have told you, I put her in a carriage, with the old hag who was in charge of her, and rode myself by the side of it, in case the old woman should try to escape."

"A truly discreet proceeding, Kennedy," O'Neil laughed. "I think, if I myself had been in your place, I should have taken a seat inside also, where you, of course, could at once have watched the old woman, and talked with the young one."

"I don't think that you would have done anything of the sort, O'Neil," Desmond said gravely, "but would have seen, as I did, that it was better that she should travel alone, with the old woman, till

she reached her father's house. Scandal will be busy enough with her name, in any case, and it is as well that it should not be said that she arrived home, in a carriage, with a young officer of O'Brien's Irish regiment."

"By my faith, Kennedy, it seems to me that you are a Saint Anthony and a Bayard rolled into one. But, seriously, you are undoubtedly right. Well, it all depends upon who was the man who carried her off, as to whether you were fortunate or unfortunate in thus having thwarted his designs. If he is some adventurer, your action will gain you heaps of credit. If, on the other hand, it was one of the king's favourites, seeking to mend his fortunes by marrying, it is probable that you will have made a dangerous enemy–nay, more, have drawn upon yourself the king's displeasure. I should think it likely that, before attempting so desperate an action as the carrying off of the Baron Pointdexter's daughter, such a man would have assured himself that the king would not view the enterprise with displeasure.

"We may assume that he would not inform His Majesty of any particulars, but would put it, hypothetically, that as he was getting into sore straits, he thought of mending his fortunes by carrying off an heiress–not, of course, one of those of whose hands the king had the disposal; and that he trusted that, if he succeeded, His Majesty would not view the matter as a grave offence. From what I know of Louis, he would reply gravely: 'I should be obliged (duke or viscount, as the case might be) to express very grave displeasure, and to order you to leave the court for a time; but, as the harm would be done, and the young lady married to you, it might be that, in time, I should pardon the offence.'

"If this is how things have gone, you may be sure that the king will not view, with satisfaction, the man who has interfered with his favourite's plan for mending his fortunes."

Desmond shrugged his shoulders.

"The king's dissatisfaction would matter very little to me," he said, "especially as he could not openly manifest it, without making it apparent that he had approved of the scheme."

"It is not such a trifle as you think, Kennedy. *Lettres de cachet* are not difficult to obtain, by powerful members of the court; especially when the person named is a young regimental officer, whose disappearance would excite no comment or curiosity, save among the officers of his own regiment. The man who carried off Mademoiselle Pointdexter must be a bold fellow, and is likely to be a vindictive one. No doubt, his object was to keep the young lady a prisoner, until she agreed to marry him, and the loss of a pretty bride with a splendid fortune is no trifling one, and likely to be bitterly resented. Whether that resentment will take the form of obtaining an order for your confinement in the Bastille, or other royal prison, or of getting you put out of the way by a stab in the back, I am unable to say, but in any case, I should advise you strongly to give up your fancy for wandering about after dark; and when you do go out, keep in the frequented portions of the town.

"Jack Farquharson, who was at Versailles with the colonel last week, was speaking of Mademoiselle Pointdexter, and said that she was charming. Did you find her so?"

"I thought nothing about it, one way or the other," Desmond said, carelessly. "I only saw her face by torchlight, and she was, of course, agitated by what had happened; and indeed, as I was busy helping Mike to yoke the horses to the carriage, I had scarcely time to look at her. When we reached Versailles it was barely daylight. I handed her out of the carriage, and left her to enter by herself, as I thought it was better that she should meet her father alone. I do not think that I should recognize her, were I to meet her in the street."

"Most insensible youth!" O'Sullivan said, with a laugh; "insensible and discreet to a point that, were it not assured, none would believe that you had Irish blood in your veins. And so, you say you are going over to Versailles tomorrow?"

"Yes. I left a message with the servant who opened the door, to that effect. Of course, I shall be glad to know if the baron intends to take any steps against his daughter's abductor, or whether he thinks it best not to add to the scandal by stirring up matters, but to take her away at once to his estates."

"He is in a difficult position," O'Neil said gravely. "The young lady has been missing for a fortnight. No one knows whether she went of her own free will, or against it. Were her father to carry her off, quietly, it would excite the worst suspicions. Better by far lodge his complaint before the king, proclaim his grievances loudly everywhere, and tell the story in all its details. Whichever course he takes, evil-minded people will think the worse; but of the two evils, the latter seems to me to be the lesser."

"I suppose it would be," Desmond agreed, "though, for my part, I should be heartily glad if I never heard another word about it."

"You are too modest altogether, Kennedy. Whatever rumours may be current, concerning the young lady, there can be no doubt that you come out splendidly, in that you hear a cry of a woman in distress; you scale walls to get in to her assistance; you and your servant encounter five of her guards, kill four of them and bind the other; rescue the maiden, and carry her off, with flying colours, in the carriage of her abductor. My dear Kennedy, you will become an object of admiration to all the ladies of the court."

"That will be absolutely disgusting," Desmond said, angrily. "It is almost enough to make one wish that one had never interfered in the affair."

"Pooh, pooh, Kennedy! I am sure that either O'Sullivan or myself would give, I was going to say a year's pay, though how one would exist without it I don't know, to have been in your place. Why, man, if you had captured a standard in battle, after feats of superhuman bravery, you would not attract half the attention that will fall to you as a consequence of this adventure. Life in the court of His Most Christian Majesty is one of the most artificial possible. The women hide their faces with powder and patches, lace themselves until they are ready to faint, walk with a mincing air, and live chiefly upon scandal; but they are women, after all, and every woman has a spice of romance in her nature, and such an adventure as yours is the very thing to excite their admiration."

"I know nothing about women," Desmond growled, "and don't want to know any of them, especially the ladies at the court of Louis."

"Well, of course, Kennedy, if the baron proclaims his wrongs, and publishes the circumstances of his daughter's abduction and rescue, the seal of silence will be taken from our lips; especially as you will, almost to a certainty, be summoned to Versailles to confirm the lady's story."

"I am afraid that that will be so," Desmond said, despondingly. "However, it can't be helped, and I suppose one must make the best of it."

To most of the officers who dropped in, in the course of the day, to see Desmond and to enquire how he got his wound, he abstained from giving any particulars. It was merely said that he and Callaghan were suddenly attacked, by five ruffians, whom they managed to beat off. Much surprise was expressed that such attack should be made upon an officer and a soldier, on whom little plunder could be expected, and who would be sure to defend themselves stoutly. Several, indeed, expressed some incredulity.

"We do not doubt for a moment, Kennedy, that you were attacked by five men, as you say, and that you routed them, but there must have been some motive for the attack. These evening strolls of yours are suspicious, and I will warrant that there must have been a great deal at the bottom of it. Now, can you deny that?"

"I neither admit nor deny anything," Desmond said, with a smile; "enough that, at present, I have told you all that I feel justified in telling. I acknowledge that there is more behind it, but at present my mouth is sealed on the subject."

The colonel was among those who came in to see him. To him, Desmond said frankly that the affair was altogether out of the common, that it was likely that the whole facts would be known shortly, but that, as other persons were concerned, he could not speak of it until he had obtained their permission.

"Then I will ask no further," Colonel O'Brien said. "I have seen enough of you to know that you would not be concerned in any affair that could bring discredit upon the corps. I am curious to know the whole story, but am quite content to wait until you feel at liberty to tell me."

The next morning, Desmond took part in the usual work of the regiment, and then, mounting his horse, rode to Versailles. On his ringing the bell at the house occupied by the Baron de Pointdexter, the old servitor, whom he had before seen, opened the gate.

"The baron is expecting you, monsieur," he said, bowing deeply; and, at his call, another servant ran out and took Desmond's horse, and led it away to the stable, while Desmond followed the old man to the house.

The door opened as they approached, and the baron, a tall man, some fifty years of age, advanced hastily, holding out both hands.

"Monsieur Kennedy," he said, "you have rendered to me the greatest service that I have received during my life. No words can express the gratitude that I feel, for one who has restored to me my only child, just when I had come to believe that she was lost to me forever. It was surely her guardian saint who sent you to the spot, at that moment."

"It might have happened to anyone, sir," Desmond said; "surely any gentleman, on hearing an appeal for help from a woman in distress, would have done just what I did."

"Let us go in," the baron said. "My daughter has been eagerly waiting your coming, especially as she tells me that she does not think she said even a word of thanks to you, being overpowered by what she had gone through, and by her joy at her sudden and unexpected deliverance. Indeed, she says that she scarcely exchanged two words with you."

"There was no opportunity, Baron, for indeed, as soon as she told me that there was a carriage and horses in the stable, I was too much occupied in getting it ready for her to depart without delay, to think of talking."

They had now entered the house, and, as the baron led the way into the sitting room, the girl rose from a fauteuil.

"This, Monsieur Kennedy, is my daughter, Mademoiselle Anne de Pointdexter. It is high time that you were formally presented to each other.

"This, Anne, is the officer who rendered you such invaluable service."

"We meet almost as strangers, mademoiselle," Desmond said, deeply bowing, "for I own that I saw so little of your face, the other night, that I should hardly have recognized you, had I met you elsewhere."

"I should certainly not have recognized you, Monsieur Kennedy. What with my own fright, and, I may say, the condition of your face, I had but a faint idea of what you were really like; but I certainly did not think that you were so young. You had such a masterful way with you, and seemed to know so perfectly what ought to be done, that I took you to be much older than you now look."

"I joined the regiment but little more than three months ago," Desmond said, "and am its youngest ensign."

"Monsieur, I owe to you more than my life, for, had it not been for you, I should have been forced into marriage with one whom I despise."

"I cannot think that, mademoiselle. From what I saw of you, I should say that you would have resisted all threats, and even undergone hopeless imprisonment, rather than yield."

"There is no saying, Monsieur Kennedy," the baron said. "Anne is of good blood, and I know that it would have been hard to break down her will, but confinement and hopelessness will tell on the bravest spirit. However that may be, she and I are your debtors for life."

"Indeed, Monsieur Kennedy," the girl said, "I pray you to believe that I am more grateful to you than words can express."

"I pray you to say no more about it, mademoiselle. I deem it a most fortunate circumstance, that I was able to come to your assistance, and especially so, when I found that the lady I had rescued

was one whose disappearance had made so great a stir; but I should have been glad to render such service to one in the poorest condition."

"My daughter said that you asked her no questions, Monsieur Kennedy, and you therefore are, I suppose, in ignorance of the name of her abductor?"

"Altogether."

"It was the Vicomte de Tulle, one who stands very high in the regard of the king, and who is one of the most extravagant and dissipated, even of the courtiers here. For some time, it has been reported that he had nigh ruined himself by his lavish expenditure, and doubtless he thought to reestablish his finances by this bold stroke.

"His plans were well laid. He waited until I had gone to Paris on business that would keep me there for a day or two. A messenger arrived with a letter, purporting to be from me, saying that I wished my daughter to join me at once, and had sent a carriage to take her to me. Anne is young, and, suspecting no harm, at once threw on a mantle and hood, and entered the carriage. It was broad daylight, and there was nothing to disquiet her until, on approaching the town, the carriage turned off the main road. This struck her as strange, and she was just about to ask the question where she was being taken, when the carriage stopped in a lonely spot, the door was opened, and a man stepped in.

"Before she had even time to recognize him, he threw a thick cloak over her head. She struggled in vain to free herself, but he held her fast. Again and again, she tried to cry out, but her mouth was muffled by the wrapping. She had heard the blinds of the carriage drawn, and finding that her struggles to free herself were vain, and receiving no answer to her supplications to be released, she remained quiet until the carriage stopped. Then she was lifted out, and carried into the house where you found her.

"The wrapping was removed, and the man who had taken it off, and, who by his attire, was a gentleman in the service of some noble, said, 'Do not be alarmed, mademoiselle. No harm is intended to you. My master is grieved to be obliged to adopt such means, but his passion for you is so great that he was driven to this step, and it will entirely depend upon yourself when your captivity will end.'

"'Your master, whoever he may be,' Anne said, 'is a contemptible villain.'

"'Naturally, you have a poor opinion of him at present,' the fellow said; 'but I am convinced that, in time, you will come to excuse his fault. It is wholly due to the depth of the feeling that he entertains towards you. There is a woman here who will wait upon you. I and my men will not intrude. Our duty is solely to see that you do not escape, which indeed would be an impossibility for you, seeing that the wall that surrounds the garden is well-nigh fifteen feet high, and the gate barred and locked, and the key thereof in my pocket.'

"He called, and the old woman whom you brought here with Anne entered, and bid her ascend to the room that had been prepared for her.

"In that respect, she had nothing to complain of. Of course, you did not notice it, as you had other things to think of, but it was handsomely furnished. There was a bed in an alcove, some flowers on the table, some books, and even a harpsichord–evidently it was intended that her imprisonment should be made as light as might be.

"Looking from the window, Anne saw that the room was at the back of the house, and had probably been chosen because some trees shut the window off from view of anyone beyond the wall. The next day, the old woman announced the Vicomte de Tulle. He bowed profoundly, and began by excusing the step that he had taken, and crediting it solely to the passion that he had conceived for her. You may imagine the scorn and reproaches with which she answered him. He was quite unmoved by her words.

"'Mademoiselle,' he said calmly, when she paused, 'you may be sure that I should not have undertaken this scheme, unless I had fully weighed the consequences. My plans have been so laid that whatever search may be made for you will be in vain. Here you are, and here you will remain

until you listen to my suit. Every want shall be satisfied, and every wish complied with; but, whether it is one year or five, you will not leave this house until you leave it as my bride.'

"'Then, sir,' she said passionately, 'I shall be a prisoner for life.'

"'So you may think, at present, mademoiselle,' he said. 'And I expected nothing else. But, with time and reflection, you may come to think otherwise. Union with me is not so terrible a matter. My rank you know, and standing high, as I do, in the favour of His Most Gracious Majesty, your position at court will be such as might gratify the daughter of the noblest family in France. The study of my life will be to make you happy.

"'I shall now leave you to think over the matter. I shall not pester you with my attentions, and for another month you will not see me again. At the end of that time, I trust that you will have seen the futility of condemning yourself to further captivity, and will be disposed to make more allowance, than at present, for the step to which my passion for yourself has driven me.'

"It was just a month since she had been carried off, and, the very day when you rescued her, the old woman had informed her that the vicomte would do himself the pleasure of calling upon her the next day. For the first fortnight she had held up bravely, in the hope that I should discover the place where she had been hidden. Then she began to feel the imprisonment and silence telling upon her, for the old woman only entered to bring in her meals, and never opened her lips, except on the first occasion, when she told her that she was strictly forbidden to converse with her. After that she began to despair, and the news that her abductor would visit her, the next day, decided her to make an attempt to escape. She had no difficulty in letting herself down from the window by the aid of her bedclothes, but she found that what had been said respecting the wall and gate was true, and that she was no nearer escape than she had been, before she had left her room. She was trying, in vain, to unbar the gate, which, indeed, would have been useless could she have accomplished it, as it was also locked. But she was striving, with the energy of desperation, when the door of the house opened, and the men rushed out and seized her. As they dragged her back to the house, she uttered the cries that brought you to her assistance. The rest you know.

"As soon as I heard her story, I went to the palace and asked for a private interview with the king. The king received me graciously enough, and asked, with an appearance of great interest, if I had obtained any news of my daughter.

"'I have more than obtained news, Your Majesty. I have my daughter back again, and I have come to demand justice at your hands.'

"'I congratulate you, indeed, Baron,' the king said, with an appearance of warmth, but I saw his colour change, and was convinced that he knew something, at least, of the matter.

"'And where has the damsel been hiding herself?' he went on.

"'She has not been hiding herself, at all, Sire,' I said. 'She has been abducted, by one of Your Majesty's courtiers, with the intention of forcing her into a marriage. His name, Sire, is the Vicomte de Tulle, and I demand that justice shall be done me, and that he shall receive the punishment due to so gross an outrage.'

"The king was silent for a minute, and then said:

"'He has, indeed, if you have been rightly informed, acted most grossly. Still, it is evident that he repented the step that he took, and so suffered her to return to you.'

"'Not so, Your Majesty,' I said. 'I owe her return to no repentance on his part, but to the gallantry of a young officer who, passing the house where she was confined, heard her cries for aid, and, with his soldier servant, climbed the gate of the enclosure, and was there attacked by the man who had charge of her, with four others. The young gentleman and his servant killed four of them, and bound the other; and then, entering the house, compelled the woman who had been appointed to act as her servant to lead the way to her chamber. Fortunately, the carriage in which she had been taken there was still in the stables, with its horses. The gallant young gentleman at once got the carriage

in readiness, placed my daughter in it, with the woman who had been attending on her. The servant drove, and he rode by the side of the carriage, and in that way brought her home this morning.'

"In spite of his efforts to appear indifferent, it was evident that the king was greatly annoyed. However, he only said:

"'You did quite right to come to me, Baron. It is outrageous, indeed, that a young lady of my court should be thus carried off, and I will see that justice is done. And who is this officer, who has rendered your daughter such a service?'

"'His name is Kennedy, Sire. He is an ensign in O'Brien's Irish regiment.'

"'I will myself send for him,' he said, 'and thank him for having defeated this disgraceful plot of the Vicomte de Tulle. I suppose you are quite sure of all the circumstances, as you have told them to me?'

"'It is impossible that there can be any mistake, Sire,' I said. 'In the first place, I have my daughter's account. This is entirely corroborated by the old woman she had brought with her, and whose only hope of escaping from punishment lay in telling the truth. In every respect, she fully confirmed my daughter's account.'

"'But the vicomte has not been absent from Versailles, for the past month. He has been at my morning levee, and on all other occasions at my breakfasts and dinners. He has walked with me in the gardens, and been always present at the evening receptions.'

"'That is so, Sire,' I said. 'My daughter, happily, saw him but once; namely, on the morning after she was captured. He then told her, frankly, that she would remain a prisoner until she consented to marry him, however long the time might be. He said he would return in a month, and hoped by that time to find that, seeing the hopelessness of her position, she would be more inclined to accept his suit.

"'It was on the eve of his coming again that my daughter, in her desperation, made the attempt to escape. She was foiled in her effort, but this, nevertheless, brought about her rescue, for her cries, as her guards dragged her into the house, attracted the attention of Monsieur Kennedy, who forthwith, as I have told you, stormed the house, killed her guards, and brought her home to me.'

"The king then sent for de Tulle, and spoke to him with great sternness. The latter did not attempt to deny my accusation, but endeavoured to excuse himself, on the ground of the passion that he had conceived for my daughter. Certainly, from the king's tone, I thought that he would at least have sent him to the Bastille; but, to my great disappointment, he wound up his reproof by saying:

"'I can, of course, make some allowances for your passion for so charming a young lady as Mademoiselle Pointdexter, but the outrage you committed is far too serious to be pardoned. You will at once repair to your estates, and will remain there during my pleasure.'

"The vicomte bowed and withdrew, and, an hour later, left Versailles. The king turned to me, as he left the room, and said, 'I trust, Monsieur le Baron, that you are content that justice has been done.'

"I was too angry to choose my words, and I said firmly, 'I cannot say that I am content, Your Majesty. Such an outrage as that which has been perpetrated upon my daughter deserves a far heavier punishment than banishment from court; and methinks that an imprisonment, as long as that which he intended to inflict upon her unless she consented to be his wife, would have much more nearly met the justice of the case.'

"The king rose to his feet suddenly, and I thought that my boldness would meet with the punishment that I desired for de Tulle; but he bit his lips, and then said coldly:

"'You are not often at court, Baron Pointdexter, and are doubtless ignorant that I am not accustomed to be spoken to, in the tone that you have used. However, I can make due allowance for the great anxiety that you have suffered, at your daughter's disappearance. I trust that I shall see you and your daughter at my levee, this evening.'

"As this was a command, of course we went, and I am bound to say that the king did all in his power to show to his court that he considered her to be wholly blameless. Of course, the story had already got about, and it was known that the vicomte had been ordered to his estates. The king

was markedly civil to Anne, talked to her for some time, expressed his deep regret that she should have been subject to such an outrage, while staying at his court, and said, in a tone loud enough to be heard by all standing round:

"'The only redeeming point in the matter is, that the Vicomte de Tulle in no way troubled or molested you, and that you only saw him, for a few minutes, on the first day of your confinement.'

"I need not say that this royal utterance was most valuable to my daughter, and that it at once silenced any malicious scandal that might otherwise have got about.

"The king stopped to speak to me, immediately afterwards, and I said:

"'I trust that you will pardon the words I spoke this morning. Your Majesty has rendered me and my daughter an inestimable service, by the speech that you have just made.'

"Thus, although dissatisfied with the punishment inflicted on the Vicomte de Tulle, and believing that the king had a shrewd idea who her abductor was, I am grateful to him for shielding my daughter from ill tongues, by his marked kindness to her, and by declaring openly that de Tulle had not seen her, since the day of her abduction. I intended to return home tomorrow, but the king himself, when I went this morning to pay my respects, and state my intention of taking Anne home, bade those standing round to fall back, and was good enough to say in a low voice to me:

"'I think, Baron, that you would do well to reconsider your decision to leave tomorrow. Your sudden departure would give rise to ill-natured talk. It would be wiser to stay here, for a short time, till the gossip and wonder have passed away.'

"I saw that His Majesty was right, and shall stay here for a short time longer. It would certainly have a bad effect, were we to seem to run away and hide ourselves in the provinces."

Mademoiselle de Pointdexter had retired when her father began to relate to Desmond what had happened.

"I know little of life in Paris, Monsieur le Baron," Desmond said, "but it certainly seems to me monstrous, that the man who committed this foul outrage should escape with what is, doubtless, but a short banishment from court."

"I do not know that the matter is ended yet, Monsieur Kennedy. In spite of the edicts against duelling, I myself should have demanded satisfaction from him, for this attack upon the honour of my family, but I am at present Anne's only protector. It is many years since I have drawn a sword, while de Tulle is noted as a fencer, and has had many affairs, of which he has escaped the consequences owing to royal favour. Therefore, were I to challenge him, the chances are that I should be killed, in which case my daughter would become a ward of the crown, and her hand and estate be bestowed on one of the king's creatures. But, as I said, the matter is not likely to rest as it is.

"Anne has, with my full consent and approval, given her love to a young gentleman of our province. He is a large-landed proprietor, and a connection of our family. They are not, as yet, formally betrothed, for I have no wish to lose her so soon; and, in spite of the present fashion of early marriages, I by no means approve of them, and told Monsieur de la Vallee that they must wait for another couple of years.

"I need scarcely say that, after what has happened, I shall reconsider my decision; for the sooner she is married, and beyond the reach of a repetition of this outrage, the better. I imagine, however, that the young gentleman will be no better satisfied than I am, that the matter should have been passed over so lightly; and will take it into his own hands, and send a challenge immediately to the vicomte. He is high spirited, and has the reputation among us of being a good fencer, but I doubt whether he can possess such skill as that which de Tulle has acquired. It is not always the injured person that comes off victorious in a duel; and, should fortune go against Monsieur de la Vallee, it would be a terrible blow to my daughter, and indeed to myself, for I am much attached to him. She is worrying about it, already.

"Of course, it is impossible that the affair can be hidden from him. It is public property now; and therefore, I sent off one of my grooms, an hour since, with a letter to him.

"Hitherto, I had not written to him about my daughter's disappearance. Knowing he would, on hearing of it, at once hasten here, where he could do no good and would only add to my trouble, I thought it best to let matters go on as they were. I had been doing everything that was possible, and to have his troubles as well as my own on my hands would have driven me to distraction.

"The groom is to change horses at every post house, and to use the greatest possible speed. You may be sure that Monsieur de la Vallee will do the same, and that in six days he will be here. I have given him the merest outline of the affair, and have not mentioned the name of Anne's abductor. Had I done so, it is probable that Philip would have gone straight to de Tulle, and forced on an encounter at once. As it is, I trust that Anne and I, between us, may persuade him to take no step in the matter. It is the honour of my family, not of his, that has been attacked. Had he been betrothed to my daughter, he would have been in a position to take up her quarrel. As it is, he has no status, except distant relationship.

"And now, Monsieur Kennedy, I have the king's order to take you to the palace. He asked me several questions about you this morning. I said that I had not yet seen you, but that you were riding over here today, and he said:

"'Bring him to me when he comes, Baron. I should like to see this young fire eater, who thrust himself so boldly into a matter in which he had no concern, solely because he heard a woman's voice calling for help.'"

"I am sorry to hear it," Desmond said, bluntly. "From what you say I imagine that, in spite of what he has done, the king is far from gratified at the failure of his favourite's plan. However, I cannot disobey his commands in the matter."

Chapter 5: A New Friend

The baron sent a servant to request his daughter to come down.

"I am going now, with Monsieur Kennedy, to the palace, Anne," he said, as she entered. "I do not suppose that we shall be absent very long. I have been talking matters over with him, and I think that he agrees with my view of them."

"But I have hardly spoken to him, yet, father!"

"You will have an opportunity of doing so, when we return. Monsieur Kennedy will, of course, dine with us. After the service that he has rendered to us, we have a right to consider him as belonging to us."

"Had I had an idea of this," Desmond said, as they walked up the hill towards the palace gate, "I should have put on my full uniform. This undress is scarcely the attire in which one would appear before the King of France, who is, as I have heard, most particular in matters of etiquette."

"He is so," the baron said. "He will know that you could not be prepared for an audience, and doubtless he will receive you in his private closet."

On ascending the grand staircase, the baron gave his name to one of the court chamberlains.

"I have orders," the latter said, "to take you at once, on your presenting yourself, to His Majesty's closet, instead of entering the audience chamber."

They were conducted along a private passage, of considerable length. On arriving at a door, the chamberlain asked them to wait, while he went inside to ascertain whether His Majesty was disengaged.

"His Majesty will see you in a few minutes, Baron," he said, when he came out. "The Duc d'Orleans is with him, but, hearing your name announced for a private audience, he is taking his leave."

In two or three minutes a handbell sounded in the room, and the chamberlain, who at once entered, returned in a moment, and conducted the baron and Desmond into the king's private apartment.

"Allow me to present, to Your Majesty," the former said, "Monsieur Desmond Kennedy, an officer in O'Brien's regiment, and an Irish gentleman of good family."

The king, who was now far advanced in life, looked at the young man with some surprise.

"I had expected to see an older man," he said.

"Though you told me, Baron, he was but an ensign, I looked to see a man of the same type as so many of my gallant Irish officers, ready for any desperate service.

"So, young sir, you have begun early, indeed, to play havoc among my liege subjects, for I hear that you, and a soldier with you, slew four of them."

"Hardly your liege subjects, Your Majesty, if I may venture to say so; for, assuredly, they were not engaged in lawful proceedings, when I came upon them."

A slight smile crossed the king's face. He was accustomed to adulation, and the simple frankness with which this young soldier ventured to discuss the propriety of the word he used surprised and amused him.

"You are right, sir. These fellows, who are ready to undertake any service, however criminal, for which they are paid, certainly do not deserve to be called liege subjects. Now, I would hear from, your own lips, how it was that you thrust yourself into a matter with which you had no concern; being wholly ignorant, I understand, that the lady whose voice you heard was Mademoiselle Pointdexter."

"The matter was very simple, Sire. Having joined the regiment but a few months, and being naturally anxious to perfect myself in exercises in arms, I have but little time to stir out, during the day, and of an evening I frequently go for long rambles, taking with me my soldier servant. I had, that evening, gone farther than usual, the night being fair and the weather balmy, and naturally, when

I heard the cry of a woman in distress, I determined to see what had happened, as it might well be that murder was being done."

He then related all the circumstances of his obtaining an entrance into the gardens, of the attack upon him by the guard, and how he finally brought Mademoiselle Pointdexter to Versailles. The king listened attentively.

"It was an exploit I should have loved to perform, when I was your age, Monsieur Kennedy. You behaved in the matter with singular discretion and gallantry; but, if you intend always to interfere, when you hear a woman cry out, it is like that your time will be pretty well occupied; and that, before long, there will be a vacancy in the ranks of your regiment. Truly, Monsieur le Baron and his daughter have reason for gratitude that you happened to be passing at the time; and I, as King of France, am glad that this outrage on a lady of the court has failed.

"I am, perhaps, not altogether without blame in the matter. A short time ago, the Vicomte de Tulle told me that he hoped to better his fortune by a rich marriage. He named no names, nor said aught of the measures he intended to adopt. But I said it would be well that he should do so, for rumours had reached me that his finances were in disorder. Whether he took this as a permission to use any means that he thought fit I cannot tell; and I certainly did not suspect, when I heard of the disappearance of Mademoiselle de Pointdexter, that he had any hand in it, and was shocked when the baron came here and denounced him to me. I am glad, indeed, that his enterprise was thwarted, for it was a most unworthy one.

"You are too young, yet, for me to grant you military promotion, but this will be a proof of my approbation of your conduct, and that the King of France is determined to suppress all irregularities at his court."

And, taking a diamond ring from his finger, he handed it to Desmond, who went on one knee to receive it.

"You will please inform your colonel that, when he comes to Versailles, I request he will always bring you with him."

The audience was evidently finished, and the baron and Desmond, bowing deeply, left the king's cabinet. The baron did not speak, till they left the palace.

"Louis has his faults," the baron then said, "but no one could play the part of a great monarch more nobly than he does. I have no doubt, whatever, that de Tulle relied implicitly upon obtaining his forgiveness, had he succeeded in forcing Anne into marrying him; though, doubtless, he would have feigned displeasure for a time. He has extricated himself most gracefully. I can quite believe that he did not imagine his favourite intended to adopt so criminal a course, to accomplish the matter of which he spoke to him, but he could not fail to have his suspicions, when he heard of Anne's disappearance. However, we can consider the affair as happily ended, except for the matter of Monsieur de la Vallee, of whom I spoke to you.

"And now, sir, that the king has expressed his gratitude to you, for saving his court from a grave scandal, how can I fitly express my own, at the inestimable service that you have rendered us?"

"I should say, Baron, that it will be most welcomely expressed, if you will abstain from saying more of the matter. It is a simple one. I went to the assistance of a woman in distress; and succeeded, at the expense of this trifling wound, in accomplishing her rescue. The lady happened to be your daughter, but had she been but the daughter of some little bourgeois of Paris, carried off by a reckless noble, it would have been the same. Much more has been made of the matter than there was any occasion for. It has gained for me the approbation and thanks of the king, to say nothing of this ring, which, although I am no judge of such matters, must be a very valuable one, or he would not have worn it; and I have had the pleasure of rendering a service to you, and Mademoiselle de Pointdexter. Therefore, I feel far more than duly rewarded, for a service somewhat recklessly undertaken on the spur of the moment."

"That may be very well, as far as it interests yourself, Monsieur Kennedy; but not so far as I am concerned, and I fear I shall have to remain your debtor till the end of my life. All I can say at present is that I hope that, as soon as you can obtain leave, you will come as a most honoured guest to my chateau. There you will see me under happier circumstances. The life of a country seigneur is but a poor preparation for existence in this court, where, although there is no longer the open licentiousness that prevailed in the king's younger days, there is yet, I believe, an equal amount of profligacy, though it has been sternly discountenanced since Madame Maintenon obtained an absolute, and I may say a well-used, influence over His Majesty."

"I shall be happy, indeed, to pay you a visit, Baron, if my military duties will permit my absenting myself, for a time, from Paris. All I know of France is its capital, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to have the opportunity of seeing its country life, in so pleasant a manner."

"Our pleasure would be no less than your own, Monsieur Kennedy.

"There is one thing I must warn you about, and that is, you must be careful for a time not to go out after dark. De Tulle has an evil reputation, and is vindictive as well as unscrupulous. Doubtless, he has agents here who will, by this time, have discovered who it was that brought his daring scheme to naught; and it is, to my mind, more than probable that he will endeavour to be revenged."

"I shall be on my guard," Desmond said quietly.

"You must be careful, indeed," the baron said. "Against open violence you can well defend yourself, but against a blow from behind with a dagger, skill and courage are of little avail. When you go out after dark, I pray you let your army servant follow closely behind you, and see that his sword is loose in its scabbard."

Desmond nodded.

"Believe me, I will take every precaution. It is not likely that there will long be need for it, for none can doubt that military operations will soon begin on a large scale, and we are not likely, if that is the case, to be kept in garrison in Paris."

When Desmond arrived that evening at the barracks, he found that the story of the rescue of Mademoiselle de Pointdexter was already known, and also that the Vicomte de Tulle had been the abductor, and had, in consequence, been banished from court. The baron had indeed related the circumstances to some of his intimate friends, but the story had varied greatly as it spread, and it had come to be reported that an officer had brought a strong body of soldiers, who had assaulted the house where she was confined, and, after a desperate conflict, had annihilated the guard that had been placed over her.

Desmond laughed, as this story was told to him, when he entered the room where the officers were gathered. The narrator concluded:

"As you have been to Versailles, Kennedy, doubtless you will have heard all the latest particulars. Have you learnt who was the officer, what regiment he belonged to, and how came he to have a body of soldiers with him, outside the town? For they say that the house where she was confined was a mile and a half beyond the walls."

There was no longer any reason for concealment. The matter had become public. The baron would certainly mention his name, and indeed his visit to the palace, and the private audience given to him and the baron, would assuredly have been noted.

"Your story is quite new to me," he said, "and is swollen, in the telling, to undue proportions. The real facts of the case are by no means so romantic. The truth of the story, by this time, is generally known, as Mademoiselle Pointdexter and her father have many friends at court. The affair happened to myself."

"To you, Kennedy?" was exclaimed, in astonishment, by all those present.

"Exactly so," he said. "Nothing could have been more simple. The evening before last I was, as usual, taking a walk and, the night being fine, I passed beyond the gate. Presently, I heard a scream and a woman's cry for help. None of you, gentlemen, could have been insensible to such an appeal.

Callaghan and I climbed over a pretty high gate. Not knowing what force there might be in the place, we occupied ourselves, at first, by unbarring and shooting the lock of the gate. The bolts were stiff, and we made some noise over it, which brought out five men. These we disposed of, after a short fight, in which I got this graze on the cheek, and Callaghan his sword wound in the shoulder."

"How did you dispose of them, Kennedy?" the colonel asked.

"I ran two of them through. Callaghan cut down one, and shot another. The fifth man cried for mercy, and we simply tied him up.

"We then found Mademoiselle Pointdexter, and, learning from her that the carriage in which she had been brought there was, with its horses, still in the stable, we got it out, harnessed the horses, and put an old woman who was mademoiselle's attendant in the carriage with her. Mike took the reins, I mounted a saddle horse, and we drove her to her father's house at Versailles, saw her fairly inside, and then, as you know, got back here just as the regiment was forming up on parade."

"A very pretty adventure, indeed," the colonel said warmly, and loud expressions of approbation rose from the other listeners.

"And why did you not tell us, when you came in?" the colonel went on.

"I had not seen Baron Pointdexter, and did not know what course he would take–whether he would think it best to hush the matter up altogether, or to lay a complaint before the king; and, until I knew what he was going to do, it seemed to me best that I should hold my tongue, altogether.

"When I went to Versailles, today, I found that he had laid his complaint before the king, and that the Vicomte de Tulle, who was the author of the outrage, had been ordered to his estates. I may say that I had the honour of a private interview with His Majesty, who graciously approved of my conduct, and gave me this ring," and he held out his hand, "as a token of his approval."

"Well, gentlemen, you will agree with me," the colonel said, "that our young ensign has made an admirable debut, and I am sure that we are all proud of the manner in which he has behaved; and our anticipations, that he would prove a credit to the regiment, have been verified sooner than it seemed possible."

"They have, indeed, Colonel," the major said. "It was, in every way, a risky thing for him to have attempted. I do not mean because of the odds that he might have to face, but because of the trouble that he might have got into, by forcing his way into a private house. The scream might have come from a mad woman, or from a serving wench receiving a whipping for misconduct."

"I never thought anything about it, Major. A woman screamed for help, and it seemed to me that help should be given. I did not think of the risk, either from armed men inside–for I had no reason to believe that there were such–or of civil indictment for breaking in. We heard the cry, made straight for the house, and, as it turned out, all went well."

"Well, indeed," the colonel said. "You have rescued a wealthy heiress from a pitiable fate. You have fleshed your maiden sword in the bodies of two villains. You have earned the gratitude of the young lady and her father, and have received the approval of His Majesty–a very good night's work, altogether. Now, tell us a little more about it."

Desmond was compelled to tell the story in much further detail than before. The colonel ordered in a dozen of champagne, and it was late before the party broke up.

"You see, we were pretty nearly right in our guess," O'Neil said, as he and O'Sullivan walked across with Desmond to their quarters. "We said that we thought it likely she might have been carried off by one of the court gallants, who felt tolerably confident that, if successful, the king would overlook the offence. This fellow, thanks to your interference, did not succeed; and the king has let him off, lightly enough, by only banishing him from court. If it had been anyone but one of his favourites, he would, by this time, have been a tenant of the Bastille.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.