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THE SPLENDID SPUR OR THE ADVENTURES OF JACK MARVEL.

By ARTHUR T. QUILLER COUCH.

CHAPTER VI. (Continued.)

There was a whole town burning below. And in the streets men were fighting, as could be told by their shouts and the rattle and blaze of musketry.

Now, the town was Marlboro and the attacking force a body of royal troops sent from Oxford to oust the garrison of the Parliament, which they did this same night with great slaughter, driving the rebels out of the place and back on the road to Bristol.

Retreating, then, to the hollow (that lay on the lee side of the ridge, away from the north wind), I gathered a pile of great stones and spread my cloak thereover for Delia.

But before an hour had passed by we were captured by a troop of rebels and taken to Bristol, where I was searched and my letter to the King taken from me by Colonel Essex.

You are now to be asked to pass over the next four weeks in as many minutes as would I had done at the time. For I spent them in a bitter cold cell in the main tower of Bristol Keep, with a chair and a pallet of straw for all my furniture, and nothing to stay my fast but the bread and water which the jailer—a sour man, if ever there were one—brought me twice a day.

What concerned me most was the cold that gnawed me continually these winter nights as I lay thinking of Delia (whom I had not seen since our capture), or gazing on the patch of frosty heaven that was all my view.

Colonel Essex had been thrice to visit me, and always offered many excuses for my treatment; but when he came to question me, why, of course, I had nothing to tell, so that each visit but served to vex him more.

"Oh, good morning," said I, for till now her father had visited me, and this was a welcome change. Instead of answering cheerfully (as I looked for), she gave a little nod of the head, rather sorrowful, and answered:

deare friend; for tho' the Colonel be a gentleman, he is press'd by them about him, and at our last interview I noted a mischief in his eye. Canst use this file? (but take care: all the gates I saw guarded with troopers to-day.) This by one who hath been my friend; for whose sake take the paper up. And believe your cordial loving comrade. D. K.

"After reading this a dozen times, till I had it by heart, I tore the letter into small pieces and hid them in my pocket. This done I felt lighter-hearted than for many a day, and (rather for employment than with any further view) began lazily to rub away at my window bar. The file work'd well. By noon the bar was half severed, and I broke off to whistle a tune. 'Twas:

"Vivre en tout cas, C'est le grand soulas" and I broke off to hear the key turning in my lock. The jailer's daughter enter'd with my second meal. Her eyes were red with weeping.

"Said I, 'Does your father beat you?' 'He has, before now,' she replied; 'but not to-day.' 'Then why do you weep?' 'Not for that?' 'For what then?' 'For you—oh, dear, dear! How shall I tell it? They are going to—to—' She sat down on the chair, and sobb'd in her apron.

"What isn't they are going to do?" "To—to-hang you." "The devil! When?" "But to—to-morrow no-horning!" I went suddenly very cold all over. There was silence for a moment, and then I heard the noise of some one dropping a plank in the courtyard below.

"What's that?" "The gurgug—" "Gallow's?" She nodded. "You are but a weak girl," said I meditating. "Aye; but there's a dozen troopers on the landing below." "Then, my dear, you must lock me up." I decided gloomily, and fell to whistling:

"Vivre en tout cas, C'est le grand soulas" A workman's hammer in the court below chind in, beating on the tune, and driving the moral home, I heard a low sob behind me. The jailer's daughter was going. "Lend me your bodkin, my dear, for a memento." She pull'd it out and gave it to me. "Thank you, and now good-bye! Stop; here's a kiss to take to my dear mistress. They shan't hang me, my dear."

The girl went out, sobbing, and lock'd the door after her. I sat down for a while, feeling dejected. For I found myself extremely young to be hang'd. But soon the whang-whang! of the hammer below rous'd me. "Come," I thought, "I'll see what thatascal is doing, at any rate," and pulling the file from my pocket, began to attack the window bar with a will. I had no need for silence, at this great height above the ground; and, besides, the hammering continued lustily.

Then began my difficulty. A dozen times I pulled my hook across the coil before it hitched; and then a full three-score of times the rope slipped away before I had raised it a dozen yards. My elbow was raw, almost with leaning on the sill, and I began to lose heart and head, when, to my delight, the jodkin caught and held. It had fastened on a kink in the rope not far from the end. I began to pull up hand over hand, trembling all the while like a leaf.

At last I caught it, and, slipping back into the room, pulled it after me yard after yard. My heart went loud and fast. There was nothing to fasten it to but an iron staple in the door; that meant losing the width of my cell, some six feet.

This, however, must be risked, and I made the end fast, lowered the other out of the window again, and, clambering to a sitting posture on the window sill, thrust out my legs over the gulf. "Thankful was I that darkness had fallen before this and hidden the giddy depths below me. I gripped the rope and pushed myself inch by inch through the window, and out over the ledge. For a moment I dangled, without courage to move a hand. Then, wrenching my legs round the rope, I loos'd my left hand and caught with it again some six inches lower. And so down I went.

Minute followed minute and left me still descending, six inches at a time, and looking neither above nor below, but always at the gray wall that seem'd sliding up in front of me. The first dizziness was over, but a horrible aching of the arms had taken its place of it. 'Twas growing intolerable, when suddenly my legs, that sought to close round the rope, found space only. I had come to the end.

I looked down. A yard below my feet the beam of the gallows gleam'd palely out of the darkness. Here was my chance. I left my hands slip down the last foot or so of rope, hung for a moment, then dropped for the beam. My feet missed it, as I intended they should; but I flung both arms out and caught it, bringing myself up with a jerk. While yet I hung clawing, I heard a footstep coming through the gateway between the two wards.

Here was a fix. With all speed and silence I drew myself up to the beam, found a hold with one knee upon it, got astride and lay down at length, flattening my body down against the timber. Yet all the while I felt sure I must have been heard. The footsteps drew nearer and passed almost under the gallows. 'Twas an officer, for, as he passed, he called out:

"Sergeant Downs! Sergeant Downs!" A voice from the guardroom in the barban answered him through the darkness. "Why is not the watch set?" "In a minute, sir; it wants a minute to six."

"I thought the Colonel order'd it at half past five?" In the silence that followed the barban clock began to strike, and half a dozen troopers tumbled out from the guardroom, some laughing, some grumbling at the coldness of the night. The officer returned to the inner ward as they dispersed to their posts; and soon there was silence again, save for the tramp-tramp of a sentry crossing and recrossing the pavement below me.

All this while I lay flattened along the beam, scarce daring to breathe. But at length, when the man had found heart to wiggle myself toward the doorway over which the gallows protruded. By slow degrees, and pausing whenever the fellow drew near, I crept close up to the wall, then, waiting the proper moment, cast my legs over, dangled for a second or two swinging myself toward the sill, flung myself off, and, touching the ledge with one toe, pitched forward in the room. The effect of this was to give me a sound crack as I struck the flooring, which lay about a foot below the level of the sill. I picked myself up and listen'd. Outside the regular tramp of the sentry prov'd he had not heard me, and I drew a long breath, for I knew that without a lantern he would never spy, in the darkness, the telltale rope dangling from the tower.



GOOD ROADS

Who shall pay? A view of the numerous methods of paying for highway construction now proposed, it may be well to ask what principles should govern the selection of a method.

In the years following 1811 the United States Government constructed the National Road, which, while sections of it were never completed, may be considered to have been 700 miles long and to have cost \$7,000,000.

Good Roads in Honduras. During the last year road building has been the chief feature of public activity in Honduras. Because the country has had no safe or convenient highways, the interior districts have been greatly retarded in their development.

THE CHINESE EMPRESS. A Description of the Ruler of the Far Eastern Nation. She sat upon a divan covered with figured Chinese silk of a beautiful pink-of-egg color.

WORDS OF WISDOM. Character determines condition. Feeding malice is fostering murder. Men differ not so much in their faith as in their phrases.

Largest Beehive. The biggest beehive in the world is a natural one in Kentucky, known as the "Mammoth beehive." It is in reality a huge cave, the main compartment of which is 150 feet high, the floor covering ten acres in extent.

Humor of Today

The Alaskan Poets. "How do you move your poles about?" We queried. "Do you float 'em?" The chief replied with gleeful shout, "Oh, no! We merely totem."

The Difference. Tenderfoot—"There is a difference, then, between East and West?" Westerner—"Yes. In the East they punch, and in the West we lynch." Chicago Journal.

Professional Courtesy. "I manage to keep my boarders longer than you do," said the first landlady. "Oh, I don't know," rejoined the other. "You keep them so thin that they look longer than they really are." Chicago News.

His Behavior. He (at the reception)—"Neurich doesn't behave as if he belonged to the best society, does he?" She—"No, indeed. He behaves as if he imagined the best society belonged to him." Chicago News.

Applies to Many. Denham—"It's a good thing for some people that this country never restricted immigration." Benham—"Why?" Denham—"They'd have been rather short of ancestors." Chicago Journal.

Edyth—"I'm surprised to hear of your engagement to old Bully. Was he the only man with sand enough to propose?" Mayne—"Oh, no; but he was the only one with rocks enough to interest me." Chicago News.

De Style—"What did your rich uncle leave you when he died?" Gumbusta—"Nothing." De Style—"Didn't he say anything to you before he passed away?" Gumbusta—"Yes; he said nothing was too good for me." Criterion.

Veterinary—"So your new bull pup is sick. What seems to be the matter with him?" Owner—"A little of everything, I guess. While we were away this afternoon he chewed up and swallowed the dictionary." Detroit Free Press.

Naturally. Oldpop—"How did you sleep last night?" Newpop—"Between walks." New York Press.

Too Easily Moved. "Newman," said the editor, "will never do as a critic." "No?" queried his assistant. "No. I saw him last night at the premier performance of that new comedy, and he actually smiled three or four times." Philadelphia Public Ledger.

She Didn't Respond. "You are the first one to whom I have shown this poem," the young poet went on. "I was wooing the muse last night—" "Poor fellow!" replied the editor, handing back the manuscript. "It's too bad she rejected you." Chicago Journal.

Quite So. Mrs. Nearby—"I'm glad you've got such a good servant." Mrs. Hunter—"Good?" Mrs. Nearby—"Why, yes; your husband says she works like lightning." Mrs. Hunter—"Exactly. She leaves ruin and disorder behind her." Philadelphia Public Ledger.

Certain of One Thing. "Well, little boy," said the kind-hearted dentist, "does the tooth hurt you?" "I don't know whether it is the tooth or whether it's just me," groaned the boy. "But I'm blamed sure that if you'll separate us the pain'll go away." Chicago Tribune.

In Boston. Mr. C. De Puyster (to stableman from the West)—"Extricate this quadruped from the vehicle. Donate him an adequate supply of nutritious elements. And when the aurora of the morning illuminates the eastern horizon I will award you an ample compensation for your amiable hospitality." Stableman (to hostler)—"The guy says to give the nag a mit full of oats. He'll chuck you two bits in the morning." Cincinnati Commercial-Tribune.

POPULAR SCIENCE

A pike with a benign bony tumor on one of its gill covers is among the specimens that have been submitted to the English Cancer Commission.

Whether matter undergoes any change of properties on being charged with electric current, has been a subject of experiment. The results have been practically negative.

The idea that moss grows thickest on the north or east side of trees seems to have been disproved. A French botanist, Leon Bedel, now concludes that mosses prefer the parts of the tree that retain most moisture.

Radiant, the invention of two English engineers, is claimed to increase the efficiency of gas fires as remarkably as the incandescent mantle adds to the light. It is a product of the waste of chemical works, replaces asbestos or fire clay balls and causes the gas to burn brightly and completely, treading the heat. The material can be had in any quantity at no greater cost than fire clay.

The action of water as an anesthetic is illustrated in some recent cases brought to notice by Joseph Clements. In one case five hemorrhoids were injected with distilled water when they were removed in fifteen minutes without pain, and the patient at once returned home.

Overproduction of Foods. Canned and Dried Preserved Fruits and Vegetables in Abundance. There has been an extensive overproduction in some lines of food, notably in certain sorts of preserved fruits and vegetables, both canned and dried.

The line of prepared foods is wonderfully complete. It is in evidence in the partially cooked cereals used at breakfast, in package tea and coffee, in the sauces, condiments, pickles, jams, jellies, mince meat, plum pudding, soups, preserved poultry, game, meats, fish and other articles, even to corned beef hash "such as mother used to make," sliced smoked beef and prepared codfish, the use of the latter saving the trouble of cooking salt cod, filling the house with an unsavory odor, the bother of shredding and enabling the housekeeper to prepare dainty fish-balls in a very short time.

Some idea of the magnitude of the production of preserved foods may be obtained from a few facts which show that this year there were nearly 11,000,000 cases of twenty-four tins each of sweet corn put up in different States; over 6,000,000 cases in three States, Illinois, Iowa and Maryland, canning corn being a comparatively new industry in two of them.

Of salmon there is an average annual output of 4,300,000 cases, or 205,400,000 tins, and besides that king of the fish family we have mackerel, trout, oysters, clams, and many other sorts, not to mention clam chowder.

A lady recently stopped at an East End open-air butcher's stall and purchased a joint at 3d. a pound. She returned shortly after and complained that it was saturated with naptha from one of the butcher's lamps.

"Sweep me!" remarked the butcher; "you gels don't want much—not 'arf! You've got a wing rub off a bullock what was bred by King Edward himself for threepence a pound, and now you ain't satisfied! You're askin' too much, mum. If you want your Sunday's joint flavored with heat-de-Cologne you'll have to spring another 'openy!'" London Tit-Bits.

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The worst about the people who make fools of themselves is that they seem to enjoy it so thoroughly.