

The Prisoner of Zenda

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CHAPTER XIII.

IN the morning of the day after that on which I swore my oath against the Six I gave certain orders and then rested in greater contentment than I had known for some time. I was at work, and work, though it cannot cure love, is yet a narcotic to it. So that Sapt, who grew feverish, marvelled to see me sprawling in an armchair in the sunshine, listening to one of my friends who sang me amorous songs in a mellow voice and induced in me a pleasing melancholy. Thus was I engaged when young Rupert Hentzau, who feared neither man nor devil, and rode through the demesne, where every tree might hide a marksman for all he knew, as though it had been the park at Strelsau, cantered up to where I lay, bowing with burlesque deference and craving private speech with me in order to deliver a message from the Duke of Strelsau. I made all withdraw, and then he said, seating himself by me:

"The king is in love, it seems."
"Not with life, my lord," said I, smiling.

"It is well," he rejoined. "Come, we are alone. Rassendyll!"

I rose to a sitting posture.
"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I was about to call one of my gentlemen to bring your horse, my lord. If you do not know how to address the king, my brother must find another messenger."

"Why keep up the farce?" he asked, negligently dusting his boot with his glove.

"Because it is not finished yet, and meanwhile I'll choose my own name."
"Oh, so be it! Yet I spoke in love for you, for indeed you are a man after my own heart."

"Saving my poor honesty," said I, "maybe I am. But that I keep faith with men and honor with women, maybe I am, my lord."

He darted a glance at me, a glance of anger.
"Is your mother dead?" said I.

"Aye, she's dead."
"She may thank God," said I, and I heard him curse me softly. "Well, what's the message?" I continued.

I had touched him in the raw, for all the world knew he had broken his mother's heart, and his airy manner was gone at the moment.

"The duke offers you more than I would," he growled. "A halter for you, sire, was my suggestion. But he offers you safe conduct across the frontier and a million crowns."

"I prefer your offer, my lord, if I am bound to one."
"You refuse?"

"Of course."
"I told Michael you would." And the villain, his temper restored, gave me the sunniest of smiles. "The fact is, between ourselves," he continued, "Michael doesn't understand a gentleman."

I began to laugh.
"And you?" I asked.

"I do," he said. "Well, well, the halter be it."
"I'm sorry you won't live to see it," I observed.

"Has his majesty done me the honor to fasten a particular quarrel on me?"

"I would you were a few years older, though."

"Oh, God gives years, but the devil gives increase," laughed he. "I can hold my own."
"How is your prisoner?" I asked.

"The k—"
"Your prisoner?"

"I forgot your wishes, sire. Well, he is alive."
He rose to his feet. I imitated him.

Then came the most audacious thing I have known in my life. My friends were some thirty yards away. Rupert called to a groom to bring him his horse and dismissed the fellow with a crown. The horse stood near. I stood still, suspecting nothing. Rupert made as though to mount. Then he suddenly turned to me, his left hand resting on his belt, his right outstretched.

"Shake hands," he said.
I bowed, and did as he had foreseen—I put my hands behind me. Quicker than thought his left hand darted out at me and a small dagger flashed in the air. He struck me in the left shoulder. Had I not swerved it had been my heart. With a cry I staggered back. Without touching the stirrup he leaped upon his horse and was off like an arrow, pursued by cries and revolver shots—the last as useless as the first—and I sank into my chair, bleeding profusely, as I watched the devil's brat disappear down the long avenue. My friends surrounded me, and then I fainted.

I suppose that I was put to bed and there lay unconscious or half-conscious for many hours, for it was night when I awoke to my full mind and found Fritz beside me. I was weak and weary, but he bade me be of good cheer, saying that my wound would soon heal and that meanwhile all had gone well, for Johann, the keeper, had fallen into the snare we had laid for him and was even now in the house.

"And the queer thing is," pursued Fritz, "that I fancy he's not altogether sorry to find himself here. He seems to think that when Black Michael has

brought off his coup, witnesses of how it was effected—saying, of course, the Six themselves—will not be at a premium."

This idea argued a shrewdness in our captive which led me to build hopes on his assistance. I ordered him to be brought in at once. Sapt conducted him and set him in a chair by my bedside. He was sullen and afraid, but, to say truth, after young Rupert's exploit we also had our fears, and if he got as far as possible from Sapt's formidable six shooter Sapt kept him as far as he could from me. Moreover, when he came in his hands were bound, but that I would not suffer.

I need not stay to recount the safeguards and rewards we promised the fellow—all of which were honorably observed and paid, so that he lives now in prosperity (though where I may not mention)—and we were the more free inasmuch as we soon learned that he was rather a weak man than a wicked and had acted throughout this matter more from fear of the duke and of his own brother Max than for any love of what was done. But he had persuaded all of his loyalty and, though not in their secret counsels, was yet, by his knowledge of their dispositions within the castle, able to lay bare before us the very heart of their devices. And here, in brief, is his story:

Below the level of the ground in the castle, approached by a flight of stone steps which abutted on the end of the drawbridge, were situated two small rooms, cut out of the rock itself. The outer of the two had no windows, but was always lighted with candles; the inner had one square window, which gave upon the moat. In this inner room there lay always, day and night, three of the Six, and the instructions of Duke Michael were that on any attack being made on the outer room it so long as they could without risk to themselves. But so soon as the door should be in danger of being forced then Rupert Hentzau or Detchard (for one of these two was always there) should leave the others to hold it as long as they could and himself pass into the inner room and without more ado kill the king, who lay there, well treated, indeed, but without weapons and with his arms confined in fine steel chains, which did not allow him to move his elbow more than three inches from his shoulder. Thus before the outer door were stormed the king would be dead. And his body? For his body would be evidence as damning as himself.

"Nay, sir," said Johann, "his highness has thought of that. While the two hold the outer room the one who has killed the king unlocks the bars in the square window (they turn on a hinge). The window now gives no light, for its mouth is choked by a great pipe of earthenware, and this pipe, which is large enough to let pass through it the body of a man, passes into the moat, coming to an end immediately above the surface of the water, so that there is no perceptible interval between water and pipe. The king being dead, his murderer swiftly ties a weight to the body and, dragging it to the window, raises it by a pulley (for lest the weight should prove too great Detchard has provided one) till it is level with the mouth of the pipe. He inserts the feet in the pipe and pushes the body down. Silently, without splash or sound, it falls into the water and thence to the bottom of the moat, which is twenty feet deep thereabouts. This done, the murderer cries loudly, 'All's well!' and himself slides down the pipe; and the others, if they can and the attack is not too hot, run to the inner room and, seeking a moment's delay, bar the door and in their turn slide down. And though the king rises not from the bottom, they rise and swim round to the other side, where the orders are for men to wait them with ropes, to haul them out, and horses. And here, if things go ill, the duke will join them and seek safety by riding; but if all goes well they will return to the castle and have their enemies in a trap. That, sir, is the plan of his highness for the disposal of the king in case of need. But it is not to be used till the last, for, as we all know, he is not inclined to kill the king unless he can, before or soon after, kill you also, sir. Now, sir, I have

spoken the truth, as God is my witness, and I pray you to shield me from the vengeance of Duke Michael; for if, after he knows what I have done, I fall into his hands I shall pray for one thing out of all the world—a speedy death, and that I shall not obtain from him!"

The fellow's story was rudely told, but our questions supplemented his narrative. What he had told us applied to an armed attack, but if suspicions were aroused and there came overwhelming force—such, for instance, as I, the king, could bring—the idea of resistance would be abandoned. The king would be quietly murdered and slid down the pipe. And—here comes an ingenious touch—one of the Six would take his place in the cell and on the entrance of the searchers loudly demand release and redress, and Michael, being summoned, would con-

cess to hasty action, but he would say the man had angered him by seeking the favor of a lady in the castle (this was Antoinette de Maubani, and he had confined him there, as he conceived he as Lord of Zenda had right to do. But he was now on receiving his apology content to let him go and so end the gossip which, to his highness' annoyance, had arisen concerning a prisoner in Zenda and had given his visitors the trouble of this inquiry. The visitors, baffled, would retire, and Michael could at his leisure dispose of the body of the king.

Sapt, Fritz and I in my bed looked round on one another in horror and bewilderment at the cruelty and cunning of the plan. Whether I went in peace or in war, openly at the head of a corps or secretly by a stealthy assault, the king would be dead before I could come near him. If Michael were stronger and overcame my party there would be an end, but if I were stronger I should have no way to punish him, no means of proving any guilt in him without proving my own guilt also. On the other hand, I should be left as king (ah, for a moment my pulse quickened), and it would be for the future to witness the final struggle between him and me. He seemed to have made triumph possible and ruin impossible. At the worst he would stand where he had stood before I crossed his path—with but one man between him and the throne, and that man an impostor. At best there would be none left to stand against him. I had begun to think that Black Michael was overfond of leaving the fighting to his friends, but now I acknowledged that the brains, if not the arms, of the conspiracy were his.

"Does the king know this?" I asked.

"I and my brother," answered Johann, "put up the pipe under the orders of my Lord of Hentzau. He was on guard that day, and the king asked my lord what it meant. 'Faith,' he answered, with his airy laugh, 'it's a new improvement on the ladder of Jacob, whereby, as you have read, sire, men pass from earth to heaven. We thought it not meet that your majesty should go, in case, sire, you must go, by the common route. So we have made you a pretty private passage, where the vulgar cannot stare at you or incommodate your passage. That, sire, is the meaning of that pipe.' And he laughed and bowed and prayed the king's leave to replenish the king's glass, for the king was at supper. And the king, though he is a brave man, as are all of his house, grew red and then white as he looked on the pipe and at the merry devil who mocked him. Ah, sir,"—and the fellow shuddered—"it is not easy to sleep quiet in the castle of Zenda, for all of them would as soon cut a man's throat as play a game at cards, and my Lord Rupert would choose it sooner for a pastime than any other."

The man ceased, and I bade Fritz take him away and have him carefully guarded, and, turning to him, I added: "If any one asks you if there is a prisoner in Zenda you may answer 'Yes.' But if any asks who the prisoner is, do not answer. For all my promises will not save you if any man here learns from you the truth as to the prisoner in Zenda. I'll kill you like a dog if the thing be so much as breathed within the house!"

Then when he was gone I looked at Sapt.
"It is a hard nut," said I.
"So hard," said he, shaking his grizzled head, "that, as I think, this time next year is like to find you still king of Ruritania!" and he broke out into curses on Michael's cunning.

I lay back on my pillows.
"There seem to me," I observed, "to be two ways by which the king can come out of Zenda alive. One is by treachery in the duke's followers."
"You can leave that out," said Sapt.
"I hope not," I rejoined, "because the other I was about to mention is—by a miracle from heaven!"

CHAPTER XIV.

IT would have surprised the good people of Ruritania to know of the foregoing talk, for, according to the official reports, I had suffered a grievous and dangerous hurt from an accidental spear thrust received in the course of my sport. I caused the bulletins to be of a very serious character and created great public excitement, whereby three things occurred—first, I gravely offended the medical faculty of Strelsau by refusing to summon to my bedside any of them save a young man, a friend of Fritz's, whom we could trust; secondly, I received word from Marshal Strakenz that my orders seemed to have no more weight than his and that the Princess Flavia was leaving for Tarlenheim under his unwilling escort (news whereat I strove not to be glad and proud), and, thirdly, my brother, the Duke of Strelsau, although too well informed to believe the account of the origin of my sickness, was yet persuaded by the reports and by my seeming inactivity that I was in truth incapable of action and that my life

was in some danger. This I learned from the man Johann, whom I was compelled to trust and send back to Zenda, where, by the way, Rupert Hentzau had him soundly flogged for daring to smirch the morals of Zenda by staying out all night. This, from Rupert, Johann deeply resented, and the duke's approval of it did more to bind the keeper to my side than all my promises.

On Flavia's arrival I cannot dwell. Her joy at finding me up and well instead of on my back and fighting with death makes a picture that even now dances before my eyes till they grow too dim to see it, and her reproaches that I had not trusted even her must excuse the means I took to quiet them. In truth, to have her with me once more was like a taste of heaven to a damned soul, the sweeter for the inevitable doom that was to follow, and I

rejoiced in being able to waste two whole days with her. And when I had wasted two days the Duke of Strelsau arranged a hunting party.

The stroke was near now, for Sapt and I after anxious consultations had resolved that we must risk a blow, our resolution being clinched by Johann's news that the king grew pale, and ill and that his health was breaking down under his rigorous confinement. Now, a man, be he king or no king, may as well die swiftly and as becomes a gentleman, from bullet or thrust, as rot his life out in a cellar. That thought made prompt action advisable in the interests of the king. From my own point of view it grew more and more necessary, for Strakenz urged on me the need of a speedy marriage, and my own inclinations seconded him with such terrible insistence that I feared for my resolution. I do not believe that I should have done the deed I dreamed of, but I might have come to flight, and my flight would have ruined the cause.

It is perhaps as strange a thing as has ever been in the history of a country that the king's brother and the king's personator in a time of profound outward peace near a placid, undisturbed country town, under semblance of amity, should wage a desperate war for the person and life of the king. Yet such was the struggle that began now between Zenda and Tarlenheim. When I look back on the time I seem to myself to have been half mad. Sapt has told me that I suffered no interference and listened to no remonstrances, and if ever a king of Ruritania ruled like a despot I was in those days the man. Look where I would, I saw nothing that made life sweet to me, and I took my life in my hand and carried it carelessly, as a man dangles an old glove. At first they strove to guard me, to keep me safe, to persuade me not to expose myself, but when they saw how I was set there grew up among them, whether they knew the truth or not, a feeling that fate ruled the issue and that I must be left to play my game with Michael my own way.

Late next night I rose from table, where Flavia had sat by me, and conducted her to the door of her apartments. There I kissed her hand and bade her sleep sound and wake to happy days. Then I changed my clothes and went out. Sapt and Fritz were waiting for me with three men and the horses. Over his saddle Sapt carried a long coil of rope, and both were heavily armed. I had with me a short stout cudgel and a long knife. Making a circuit, we avoided the town and in an hour found ourselves slowly mounting the hill that led to the castle of Zenda. The night was dark and very stormy, gusts of wind and spits of rain caught us as we breasted the incline, and the great trees moaned and sighed. When we came to a thick clump about a quarter of a mile from the castle we bade our three friends hide there with the horses. Sapt had a whistle, and they could join us in a few moments if danger came, but up till now we had met no one. I hoped that Michael was still off his guard, believing me to be safe in bed. However that might be, we gained the top of the hill without accident and found ourselves on the edge of the moat where it sweeps under the road, separating the old castle from it. A tree stood on the edge of the bank, and Sapt silently and diligently set to make fast the rope. I stripped off my boots, took a pull at a flask of brandy, loosened the knife in its sheath and took the cudgel between my teeth. Then I shook hands with my friends, not heeding a last look of entreaty from Fritz, and laid hold of the rope. I was going to have a look at Jacob's ladder.

Gently I lowered myself into the water. Though the night were wild, the day had been warm and bright and the water was not cold. I struck out and began to swim round the great walls which frowned above me. I could see only three yards ahead. I had then good hopes of not being seen as I crept along close under the damp, moss grown masonry. There were lights from the new part of the castle on the other side, and now and again I heard laughter and merry shouts. I fancied I recognized young Rupert Hentzau's ringing tones and pictured him flushed with wine.

Recalling my thoughts to the business in hand, I rested a moment. If Johann's description were right, I must be near the window now. Very slowly I moved, and out of the darkness ahead loomed a shape. It was the pipe, curving from the window to the water. About two feet of its surface was displayed. It was as big round as two men. I was about to approach it when I saw something else, and my heart stood still. The nose of a boat protruded beyond the pipe on the other side, and, listening intently, I heard a slight shuffle, as of a man shifting his position. Who was the man who guarded Michael's invention? Was he awake or was he asleep? I felt if my knife were ready and trod water. As I did so I found bottom under my feet. The foundations of the castle extended some fifteen inches, making a ledge, and I stood on it, out of water from my armpits upward. Then I crouched and peered through the darkness under the pipe, where, curving, it left a space.

There was a man in the boat. A rifle lay by him. I saw the gleam of the barrel. Here was the sentinel! He sat very still. I listened. He breathed heavily, regularly, monotonously. By heaven, he slept! Kneeling on the shelf, I drew forward under the pipe till my face was within two feet of his. He was a big man, I saw. It was Max Hoff, the brother of Johann. My hand stole to my belt, and I drew out my knife. Of all the deeds of my life I love the least to think of this, and whether it was the act of a man or a

traitor I will not ask. I said to myself, "It is war, and the king's life is at stake." And I raised myself from beneath the pipe and stood up by the boat, which lay moored by the ledge. Holding my breath, I marked the spot and raised my arm. The great fellow stirred. He opened his eyes—wide, wider. He gasped in terror at my face and clutched at his rifle. I struck home. And I heard the chorus of a love song from the opposite bank.

Leaving him where he lay, a huddled mass, I turned to "Jacob's Ladder." My time was short. This fellow's turn of watching might be over directly, and relief would come. Leaving over the pipe, I examined it from the point it left the water to the top-most extremity, where it passed, or seemed to pass, through the masonry of the wall. There was no break in it, no chink. Dropping on my knees, I tested the under side. And my breath went quick and fast, for on this lower side, where the pipe should have clung close to the masonry, there was a gleam of light. That light must come from the cell of the king! I set my shoulder against the pipe and exerted my strength. The chink widened a very, very little, and hastily I desisted. I had done enough to show that the pipe was not fixed in the masonry at the lower side.

Then I heard a voice—a harsh, grating voice:
"Well, sire, if you have had enough of my society I will leave you to repose, but I must fasten the little ornaments first."
It was Detchard. I caught the English accent in a moment.

"Have you anything to ask, sire, before we part?"
The king's voice followed. It was his, though it was faint and hollow, different from the merry tones I had heard in the glades of the forest.
"Pray my brother," said the king, "to kill me. I am dying by inches here."
"The duke does not desire your death, sire—yet," sneered Detchard. "When he does, behold your path to heaven!"

The king answered:
"So be it. And now, if your orders allow it, pray leave me."
"May you dream of paradise," said the ruffian.
The light disappeared. I heard the bolts of the door run home. And then I heard the sob of the king. He was alone, as he thought. Who dares mock at him?
I did not venture to speak to him. The risk of some exclamation escaping him in surprise was too great. I dared do nothing that night, and my task now was to get myself away in safety and to carry off the carcass of the dead man. To leave him there would tell too much. Casting loose the boat, I got in. The wind was blowing a gale now, and there was little danger of oars being heard. I rowed swiftly round to where my friends waited. I had just reached the spot when a loud whistle sounded over the moat behind me.

"Hello, Max!" I heard shouted.
I halted Sapt in a low tone. The rope came down. I tied it round the corpse and then went up it myself.
"Whistle you, too," I whispered, "for our men and haul in the line. No talk now."
They hauled up the body. Just as it reached the road three men on horseback swept round from the front of the castle. We saw them; but, being on foot, we escaped their notice. But we heard our men coming up with a shout.

"The devil, but it's dark!" cried a ringing voice.
It was young Rupert. A moment later shots rang out. Our people had met them. I started forward at a run, Sapt and Fritz following me.
"Thrust, thrust!" cried Rupert again, and a loud groan following told that he himself was not behindhand.
"I'm done, Rupert!" cried a voice.
"They're three to one. Save yourself!"
I ran on, holding my cudgel in my hand. Suddenly a horse came toward me. A man was on it, leaning over the shoulder.

"Are you cooked, too, Krafstein?" he cried.
There was no answer.
I sprang to the horse's head. It was Rupert Hentzau.
"At last!" I cried.
For we seemed to have him. He had only his sword in his hand. My men were hot upon him. Sapt and Fritz were rearing up. I had outstripped them, but if they got close enough to fire he must die or surrender.
"At last!" I cried.
"It's the play actor!" cried he, slashing at my cudgel. He cut it clean in two, and, judging discretion better than death, I ducked my head and (I blush to tell) scampered for my life. The devil was in Rupert Hentzau, for he put spurs to his horse, and, turning to look, saw him ride full gallop to the edge of the moat and leap in, while the shots of our party fell thick round him like hail. With one gleam of moonlight we should have ridden him with balls, but in the darkness he won to the corner of the castle and vanished from our sight.

"The deuce take him!" grinned Sapt. "It's a pity," said I, "that he's a villain. Whom have we got?"
We had Lauengram and Krafstein. They lay stiff and dead, and, concealment being no longer possible, we flung them, with Max, into the moat and, drawing together in a compact body, rode off down the hill. And in our midst went the bodies of four gallant gentlemen. Thus we traveled home, heavy at heart for the death of our friends, sore uneasy concerning the king and cut to the quick that young Rupert had played yet another winning hand with us.

For my own part I was vexed and angry that I had killed no man in open fight, but only stabbed a knave in his sleep. And I did not love to hear

RURITANIA is not in England or the quarrel between Duke Michael and myself could not have gone on, with the remarkable incidents which marked it, without more public notice being directed to it. Duels were frequent among all the upper classes, and private quarrels between great men kept the old habit of spreading to their friends and dependents. Nevertheless, after the affair which I have just related such reports began to circulate that I felt it necessary to be on my guard.

The death of the gentlemen involved could not be hidden from their relatives. I issued a stern order declaring that dueling had attained unprecedented license (the chancellor drew up the document for me, and very well he did it), and forbidding it save in the gravest cases. I sent a public and stately apology to Michael, and he returned a deferential and courteous reply to me, for our one point of union was—and it underlay all our differences—and induced an unwilling harmony between our actions—that we could neither of us afford to throw our cards on the table. He, as well as I, was a "play actor," and, hating one another, we combined to dupe public opinion. Unfortunately, however, the necessity for concealment involved the necessity of delay. The king might die in his prison or even be spirited off somewhere else. It could not be helped. For a little while I was compelled to observe a truce, and my only consolation was that Flavia most warmly approved of my edict against dueling, and when I expressed delight at having won her favor prayed me, if her favor were any motive to me, to prohibit the practice altogether.

"Wait till we are married," said I, smiling.
Not the least peculiar result of the truce and of the secrecy which dictated it was that the town of Zenda became in the daytime—I would not have trusted far to its protection by night—a sort of neutral zone, where both parties could safely go, and I, riding down one day with Flavia and Sapt, had an encounter with an acquaintance which presented a ludicrous side, but was at the same time embarrassing. As I rode along I met a dignified looking person driving in a two horsed carriage. He stopped his horses, got out and approached me, bowing low. I recognized the head of the Strelsau police.
"Your majesty's ordinance as to dueling is receiving our best attention," he assured me.

If the best attention involved his presence in Zenda, I resolved at once to dispense with it.
"Is that what brings you to Zenda, prefect?" I asked.
"Why, no, sire. I am here because I desired to oblige the British ambassador."
"What's the British ambassador doing dans cette galere?" said I carelessly.
"A young countryman of his, sire—a man of some position—is missing. His friends have not heard from him for two months, and there is reason to believe that he was last seen in Zenda." Flavia was paying little attention. I dared not look at Sapt.

"What reason?"
"A friend of his in Paris, a certain M. Featherly, has given us information which makes it possible that he came here, and the officials of the railway recollect his name on some luggage."
"What was his name?"
"Rassendyll, sire," he answered, and I saw that the name meant nothing to him. But, glancing at Flavia, he lowered his voice as he went on: "It is thought that he may have followed a lady here. Has your majesty heard of a certain Mme. de Maubani?"
"Why, yes," said I, my eye involuntarily traveling toward the castle. "She arrived in Ruritania about the same time as this Rassendyll."
I caught the prefect's glance. He was regarding me with inquiry writ large on his face.

"Sapt," said I, "I must speak a word to the prefect. Will you ride on a few paces with the princess?" And I added to the prefect, "Come, sir, what do you mean?"
He drew close to me, and I bent in the saddle.
"If he were in love with the lady?" he whispered. "Nothing has been heard of him for two months." And this time it was the eye of the prefect which traveled toward the castle.
"Yes, the lady is there," I said quietly. "But I don't suppose Mr. Rassendyll—is that the name?—is."
"The duke," he whispered, "does not like rivals, sire."
"You're right there," said I, with all sincerity. "But surely you hint at a very grave charge."

He spread his hands out in apology. I whispered in his ear:
"This is a grave matter. Go back to Strelsau!"
"But, sire, if I have a clow here?"
"Go back to Strelsau," I repeated.
"Tell the ambassador that you have a clow, but that you must be left alone for a week or two. Meanwhile I'll charge myself with looking into the matter."
The ambassador is very pressing, sire.

"You must quiet him. Come, sire; you see that if your suspicions are correct it is an affair in which we must move with caution. We can have no scandal. Mind you return tonight!"
He promised to obey me, and I rode on to rejoin my companions, a little easier in my mind. Inquiries after me must be stopped at all hazards for a week or two, and this clever official had come surprisingly near the truth. His impression might be useful some day, but if he acted on it now it might mean the worst to the king. Heartily did I curse George Featherly for not holding his tongue.