

IN MONMOUTH'S CAUSE!



A Stirring Tale of
Monmouth's Invasion
of the West Country

By

DUDLEY FROBISHER



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

"I BID thee, under pain of my Royal displeasure, to muster such force that is within thy means to strike a blow for thy rightful ruler.—MONMOUTH."

Old Sir Stephen Athelney looked round hastily as he read this last sentence. It was part of a letter which had been left at the castle, on the previous night, by a horseman, who had not stopped to rest or sup, but spurred on his tired steed as if the whole of the Royal dragoons were at his heels.

"Monmouth knows his friends," Sir Stephen muttered, his eyes flashing, his usually pallid face flushed with excitement. "But these old limbs are too weak to bear war's harness. Odds life, 'tis well I have a son. Ralph shall go, and, what-e'er comes o' this rebellion, Monmouth shall have no cause to say that the house of Athelney did not take its part."

Sir Stephen glanced round the great hall once more, then he crossed over to where a fire of logs burnt on the hearth, and thrust the letter

amongst the glowing embers. Truly it was indeed a time when a man had reason to be cautious, for suspicion, nothing more, was near enough to bring a sentence of death upon the suspected.



"I thank thee!" Monmouth cried, in a high, clear voice, "and I thank ye all, citizens, for the welcome!" (See page 170.)

As the last fragment of the paper flared up the sound of fast-beating hoofs reached Sir Stephen's ears. The old man glanced hastily to where a sword hung upon the wall, but before he could reach it the door was flung open, and a tall, handsome young man, about twenty-one years of age, dashed into the room. His dress was that of a Cavalier, without being gaudy, and he wore his own hair upon his shoulders, despite the fact that wigs were the fashion at court.

"Ralph!" Sir Stephen cried, "I am glad it is thee. In these troublous times enemies may come as oft as friends. What news hast thou?"

"Of the best, father," Ralph answered eagerly; "Monmouth lands at Lyme to-night!"

"To-night!" Sir Stephen ejaculated.

"Ay!"

"Then there is no time to be lost, Ralph. Methinks 'twould take but little to make my old frame don back and breast plates again; but there, Ralph, the honour of Athelney lies with you!"

"You mean, father?"

"I mean that already I have heard from Monmouth, the man who should sit upon the throne of England, calling upon me to raise my men in arms to help his cause."

"And the letter—where is it?" Ralph asked eagerly.

"Where such things are safest—in the fire. Remember, lad, Monmouth is not yet king, and Kirke's dragoons scour the country, ready to arrest on the smallest evidence any man believed to favour any but King James II."

"I am ready to ride when thou wilt, father," Ralph said quietly.

Sir Stephen nodded.

"Ralph," he said, "by evening ye must take the road. I had thought to keep thee with me a few days more, but now ye will be safer in Monmouth's camp. I can fit ye out befitting our house, and by to-morrow at daybreak ye should be in Lyme."

"I am ready, father," Ralph answered quietly.

Just after dusk that evening Ralph rode through the park and out on to the road.

He was fully equipped in back and breast plates, and every other piece of armour of use to a Cavalier. His good sword hung by his side, and a brace of reliable pistols were in his saddle-holsters. He bore a letter from his father to Monmouth, and carried funds enough to serve him in case of need.

The night was dark, and Ralph jogged along easily, not wishing to tire his horse, for there was a long ride before them. His blood tingled with excitement as he thought of the mission upon which he was bound, and that he was to strike a blow for Monmouth and against the king, whom all decent subjects had learnt to loathe.

At midnight Ralph halted beside a small brook to breathe his horse. He loosed the girths, and rubbed the brute down as well as he could with a piece of stick. Suddenly a pistol-shot rang out, and he caught the sound of galloping hoofs.

Seizing the bridle of his horse, Ralph drew him behind a line of trees, waiting to see what would happen. The galloping drew nearer; a solitary horseman flashed by, bending low on his steed's neck, then three, in the uniform of the dragoons, came charging after him.

With the steadiness of a man whose nerve is not easily shaken, Ralph tightened the girth, swung himself into the saddle, and galloped after the men who had charged past him. The sight of the uniforms had given him some inkling of the truth. The solitary horseman was probably a man bound for Monmouth's camp, and somehow he had fallen into the hands of the enemy.

Ralph loosened his sword in his scabbard as he galloped along, and listened for the beat of the hoofs to guide him. He drew nearer to the sound, then it stopped abruptly. Away to the left a shot rang out, followed quickly by another. Without the slightest hesitation Ralph put his horse at the hedge, and galloped across the field on the other side.

He had not far to go. Through the darkness showed a still darker shape—a barn. A man stood with his back to this, keeping at bay the three dragoons, who had dismounted.

Ralph plucked out a pistol, dropped his bridle, and fired. One of the dragoons fell.

He thrust the empty weapon back into its holster, and with drawn sword charged down upon the remaining men. Only once he struck, catching his man a nasty blow on the arm; then, leaving their wounded comrade to his fate, the other two dragoons darted to their horses, clambered hastily into the saddle, and spurred away into the night.

Hardly had they gone than the man who had been defending himself single-handed against them sank to the ground. Ralph dismounted, and knelt beside him.

"Ye are hurt," he said quietly. "Where?"

"It doth not matter," the man answered in a weak voice, "nothing can save me. I thank thee for thy aid, though it came too late."

Ralph saw that the man spoke the truth, and that in a few minutes he would be dead.

"It's naught I can do for ye?" he asked.

The dying man raised himself slightly, peering up into Ralph's face.

"Your name?" he asked eagerly.

"Ralph Athelney."

"The luck favoureth," the man muttered. Then, raising his voice, he added: "Ye can prove that?"

Ralph drew the letter from his pocket that his father had given him for Monmouth, and pointed to the words, "By the hand of my son Ralph."

The dying man raised himself still more, his eyes straining until they could make out the words.

"Good!" he said weakly. "Ye will find a packet of papers beneath my breastplate. They must be placed in Monmouth's hands. It was to save these I rode. It is a list of those faithful to Monmouth. Had it fallen into the hands of those dragoons many a good man would not have lived to draw sword for the right king. Take them to—Monmouth."

Ralph found the packet and placed it safely beneath his own plate.

"I shall not fail ye," he said quietly. "Is there naught that I can do to ease thy pain?"

"Death alone can do that," the man answered weakly. "Ride—that will ease it, mayhap. I shall know they—are safe!"

Realising that he could do nothing more, Ralph mounted his horse, called good-bye

to the dying man, and galloped away, making a slant for the road. Already he was working for the cause for which he had sworn to give his life, should it be asked of him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

AT daybreak the next morning Ralph, weary and travel-stained, jogged into Lyme. The place was decorated with banners and arches of evergreens, with here and there great scrolls bearing the words, "Hail to Monmouth, our King!" The streets were full of rough-looking men, some armed with swords or guns, but most carrying sickles and scythe-blades; a few had nothing but stout staves. On the face of every man was set determination, for they were of the breed that dies hard when once roused to fight. In all there were a matter of six thousand men in the town, drawn from all parts of the country and from all classes.

Ralph dismounted at the door of an inn, and gave his horse in charge of a groom. Then, tired though he was, he washed, and was ready to see Monmouth.

"He has come?" he asked of the landlord.

"Late last night," the man answered, "he be at Master Stern's house, back there. Ye have business wi' him?"

"Ay, and it will not keep, my friend."

"Then my boy shall take ye there, sir."

Guided by the small boy, who was sufficiently aware of the importance of his mission not to wish to stop and eye every group of strange men, Ralph reached the house of Master Stern. Before the door of this two men, dressed as Cavaliers, stood on guard. They drew their swords as Ralph approached the door.

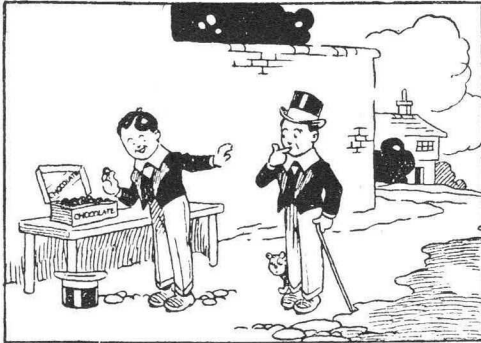
"I have urgent business with his Majesty," Ralph said quietly.

"Which must needs wait, sir," one of the Cavaliers answered. "He is closeted with Master Wade and Doctor Ferguson, and must not be disturbed."

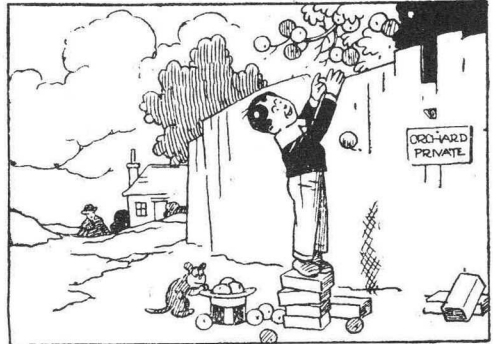
"Send that in to his Majesty," Ralph said, drawing his father's letter from his pocket; "I ask no more of ye."

"Stap me," the Cavalier remarked with a smile. "But alack, there may be poison within such a missive."

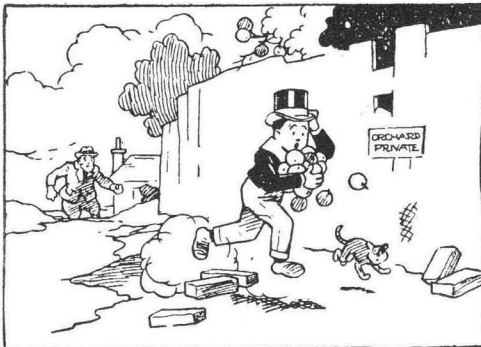
THE FUNNY ADVENTURES OF BUBBLE AND SQUEAK, THE TERRIBLE TWINS



"Will you give me a chocolate?" said Bubble to Squeak.
 "You've got enough there to last you a week!"
 But Squeak waved him off, and replied with a grin:
 "Just keep off the grass while I have a tuck-in!"



So Bubble strolled off to the orchard near by,
 And on many fine apples he feasted his eye.
 "They're nicer than chocolates!" he chuckled, with glee.
 "If I pick a good lot I sha'n't need any tea!"



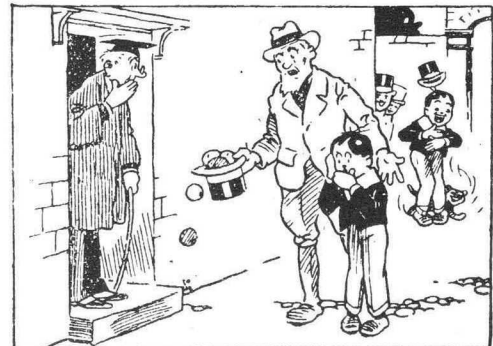
Then the farmer bobbed over the brow of the hill.
 "Oh, crumbs!" faltered Bubble. "He'll catch me, he will!
 I'd better buzz off while I've still got a chance,
 Or that merry old farmer will lead me a dance!"



Squeak had finished his chocolates when Bubble appeared.
 "I've brought you some apples," he said, and Squeak cheered.
 He held out his hat with a confident grin.
 "That's nice of you, Bubble, you thoughtful old twin!"



But alas! for the farmer then came on the scene,
 And Squeak's boyish face turned an art shade in green.
 "I've caught you red-handed!" the farmer declared.
 "You've stolen my apples! You shall not be spared!"



Then the farmer conducted poor Squeak to the Head.
 "This boy has been raiding my orchard," he said.
 Squeak's knees knocked together; he stood there aghast.
 "Ha, ha!" chuckled Bubble. "I've floored him at last!"

"Nay, sir," Ralph answered, "but do me the favour to send it in."

Five minutes later Ralph was ushered into the house, and shown into a small room in which three men were seated. He had no difficulty in recognising Monmouth, whose handsome, beautifully cut face wore an expression of worry. He dropped on his knee.

"Nay, Master Athelney," Monmouth said, with a pleasant smile, "only my enemies shall do that."

"Ay, they shall be bowed down," Dr. Ferguson cried, with a strong Scotch accent, a light almost of madness on his fanatical face—"they shall be bowed down like the corn before the wind."

Ralph could not refrain from glancing at this man, of whom he had often heard as half a madman and wholly a fanatic. The other man, Wade, had been a lawyer, and it had been said that he was practically entirely responsible for this attempt to place Monmouth on the throne.

"Let us trust so," Monmouth answered; "but in the meantime there are other matters to attend to. Sir Stephen saith that he hath two hundred men willing to follow me, Master Athelney?"

"That, or more, sir," Ralph answered; "two for certain, but mayhap three. Fire soon spreads, your Majesty."

"Ah!" Monmouth ejaculated, with a pleased look, "I like that saying, 'Fire soon spreads.'"

"But I have other news for you, sire."

"Speak freely, Master Athelney."

In as few words as possible Ralph told his adventure of the previous night, and at the conclusion handed over the papers which the dying man had entrusted to him. Monmouth took them eagerly, broke the seal, and scanned the contents hurriedly.

"Ye have done well," he said earnestly. "Had this been lost many good men, leaders, too, would have passed into the hands of the usurper."

He paced up and down the room, his brows knit. When he stopped, he placed a hand quietly on Ralph's shoulder.

"Ye have done well," he repeated; "will ye do more?"

"My life is yours, sire," Ralph answered quietly.

"Then rest ye till to-night. Then to horse, and ride for Taunton. Call on your father, the loyal Sir Stephen, tell him that the trysting-place is Taunton; tell all the faithful ye meet, and await me in that town, where I shall unfold my standard."

"It shall be done, your Majesty."

"Good! Would that I had ten thousand men like ye!" Monmouth said.

"The right is better than ten thousand," Dr. Ferguson said, with a roll of his eyes.

"Granted. But the men are useful, doctor."

Ralph, dismissed from the royal presence, hurried back to the inn, ate a hurried meal, then sought the rest which he so much needed. It was evening when he awoke, refreshed and ready for anything. His first care was to see that his horse had been properly tended during the day; secondly came a substantial meal.

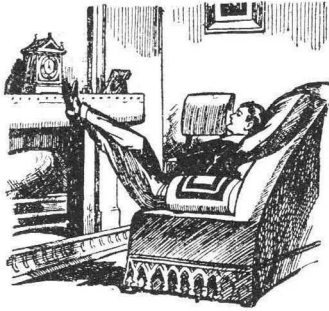
As the clock of the parish church struck eight Ralph rode out of Lyme, threading his way among the encampments in streets. Great fires were burning, over which oxen were roasting whole. At some of the corners ministers were preaching fervently, and there was not one of them but had a good audience.

Athelney Castle lay not more than ten miles from Taunton, and Ralph reckoned to make his home by the next morning, and reach Taunton on the following evening. Earlier than that he did not expect to reach his destination, for he knew that he would most probably have to make a circuitous route to avoid the king's troops. He rode steadily on once he had left Lyme, keeping as much as possible off the main road, knowing that most of the danger lay there. That the dragoons were scattered about the neighbourhood he had reason to be aware, as the reader knows. Nothing happened until he had covered a clear ten miles of his journey, then, to his annoyance, his mare cast one of her hind shoes, and he was forced to dismount or risk laming her.

Away to the left, not more than a mile distant, a light or two shone out, and Ralph guessed that the village of Little Hillham

THE
GREYFRIARS GALLERY
IN VERSE

By Dick Penfold



No. 6: Lord Mauleverer



Who dreams away the golden hours
On sofas and in shady bowers,
While we display our batting powers?
Why, Mauly!

Who votes school life a beastly drag,
And seldom joins in jape or rag,
Because he finds it too much fag?
Why, Mauly!

Who flirted with the fair Miss Bunn,
And made us call him, just for fun,
The hare-brained offspring of a gun?
Why, Mauly!

Who, on one famous trip to town,
Unearthed a fact which made him frown—
Miss Bunn belonged to Private Brown!
Why, Mauly!

Who drives his schoolmates to despair,
And fairly makes them tear their hair
By leaving banknotes everywhere?
Why, Mauly!

But who, in spite of many a fad,
Is really quite a charming lad—
A real good fellow? Yaas, begad—
It's Mauly!

lay there. Leading his horse by the bridle, he cut across the fields, and in less than a quarter of an hour entered the main and only street of the village. The clink of a heavy hammer reached his ears, and as he looked in the direction of the sound he caught sight of a broad beam of light issuing from an open door. The smith, despite the lateness of the hour, was still at work.

Ralph approached the open door cautiously, for there might be dragoons within. To his relief, his fears were not confirmed; only the smith and another man, evidently of the yeoman class, were in the forge. It was the latter's horse that was being shod—a fine, heavy brute, well fitted to be a charger.

"Evenin', sir," the yeoman said, touching his hat respectfully.

"Good-evening," Ralph answered; and, having tethered his horse to a ring in the wall, he waited quietly.

No more was said, for at such times, when no man knew who his enemy might be, it was unsafe to indulge in even the most ordinary conversation.

The smith humped the horse's hoof on to his knee, a burning smell filled the smithy, and his hammer tapped sharply. In five minutes the shoe was fixed. The yeoman took the horse's bridle, paid the smith, and passed out of the forge.

"Be sharp, my friend," Ralph said, as he handed over his horse. "I have little time this night."

"And many others tell that tale, sir," the smith answered, as he prepared to get to work; "mayhap some'n won't be havin' time tew live soon."

From outside came a sharp cry, followed by the clash of steel. Ralph's hand leapt to his sword, and he sprang towards the door. The smith gripped him by the arm, holding him back.

"It were best for ye not to look," he whispered hoarsely; "strange things is coom tew us."

Ralph shook himself free and sprang through the doorway. In a moment he saw what had happened. Two dragoons, their horses standing close by in charge of a third man, were fiercely attacking the yeoman, who

had nothing with which to defend himself but a stout cudgel.

"Surrender, you dog!" one of the dragoons cried to the yeoman as Ralph emerged. "Spit

"Split his pate, Jack!" the man holding the horses cried.

Hardly had the man spoken before the yeoman's cudgel was cleft in half by a sword-cut, and he stood unarmed, at the mercy of the savage troopers.

"Will ye give up the horse?" one of them cried, brandishing his weapon.



"I surprise ye," the man said, with a slight smile, observing Ralph's amazed expression. "Permit me to do the honours, and present myself. Sir Lawrence Lamore, banneret, your most humble servant." (See page 173.)

me, but d'ye take us for horse-thieves?"

"Mighty like it," the yeoman answered, still stoutly defending himself with his stick.

"No!" the yeoman answered fiercely.

The swords whirled above the man's head, but before they could descend Ralph had gripped one of the men round the waist from

behind, whirled him above his head, and flung him at his comrade. Both fell heavily, and the yeoman, seeing his chance, snatched up the sword that one of them had let fall.

The dragoons struggled to their feet, but drew back hastily before the ready swords of Ralph and the yeoman.

"Ye shall pay for this!" one of them yelled. "Ye crop-eared rebel! I'll spit ye with——"

"Try," Ralph broke in sternly, "or go."

With a torrent of abuse the dragoons retreated to their horses, and, digging their spurs in savagely, dashed away down the street. Ralph turned and went quietly into the forge, but the yeoman followed him.

"I owe ye the horse, sir," he said gratefully, "an', methinks, my life. Ye ride for Monmouth?"

Ralph looked at the man sharply, his hand on his sword.

"A dangerous question at such a time," he said. "What side claims ye?"

"None did," the man answered boldly, "but now it's Monmouth. I'm against these horse-thieves and their master. Monmouth, say I."

"Then the trysting-place is Taunton," Ralph whispered, having no wish that the smith, who was busy with the mare, should overhear him.

"Ye ride there, sir?"

"Yes."

"Then let me ride with ye. The roads are full of the vermin we have just met; two swords are better'n one. Let me ride with ye."

"Let him, sir," the smith said shortly, glancing up from his work; "a better man nor Master Jack Truman ne'er owned a horse."

Ralph hesitated a minute, then he held out his hand to the yeoman.

"We ride together," he said heartily, "and strike together for the right."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

As soon as Ralph's horse had been shod he mounted and rode out of the village with Truman, who had in the meantime fetched a sword from his house, which was close by, and was now ready to throw in his lot with

Monmouth. Ralph found him a distinct addition, for he was full of chatter, most of it idle, yet helping to pass away the long hours of the night.

At daybreak Athelney Castle was reached, and Ralph saw his father once more for a few minutes to give him Monmouth's instructions. Little did he think how many months were to pass before he would see him again.

No real halt was made here, and by eight o'clock the two men rode into the little village of Liddlecoomb. At this early hour the main street was practically deserted, and the man who took the horses at the inn door was fully three parts asleep. Ralph led the way into the inn, but before he had taken more than half a dozen steps a red-faced, jolly-looking man stepped quickly out of a side room.

"Gentlemen," he said quickly, with a sharp glance behind him, "don't ye coom——"

Before he could finish speaking another door opened, and a long face, crowned by a steel cap, was thrust out. A moment later a tall, thin man, garbed as an officer of dragoons, clanked out into the passage.

"Marry," he said, with a grin, "but ye come at a good time, gentlemen. My brother officers and myself—I am Colonel Spiller—are tired of winning guineas from each other, and would have fresh sport. What say ye?"

Ralph glanced over his shoulder at Truman, whose hand was ready on his sword-hilt.

"Have we time?" he queried.

Before Truman could answer the dragoon had approached, and was staring keenly at the two friends.

"Nay, but ye must have," he said, with a sinister look. "There can be no hurry. Those that ride for Monmouth needs must be quick, or we'll kill their king before they see him. But ye—why need ye rattle off like witches on a stick?"

"We accept your offer, sir," Ralph answered boldly, seeing that nothing else could be done.

Ralph and Truman followed the soldier into a large room at the back of the building, the window of which opened on to a garden. Ralph noticed that stout iron bars were across it. In the room were four men, all in the uniform of the Royal dragoons. Wine and

dice-boxes were before them; they were using the former eagerly but the latter istlessly, and already they were all more or less affected by the wine they had consumed.

"Comrades," Spiller cried, "I make a wager. Who will back my stroke against this gentleman's?"

"I will, colonel, an' easy won," a man in the uniform of a cornet cried drunkenly. "The test?"

"The steel cap there," Spiller answered, taking it from the wall as he spoke and placing it upon the table. "He who makes the deepest cut to be the winner."

All the other officers had stopped their gaming now to watch their superior officer.

"Wilt take me, sir?" Spiller asked, with a touch of insolence, turning to Ralph.

"Yes. And the stakes?"

"A hundred of your guineas against another hundred which, on the honour of an officer and a gentleman, I swear to pay ye as soon as convenient, should I lose."

This test did not please Ralph. He had little fear that this man would beat him, and he guessed that the effect of defeat upon the officer would not be pleasant. Spiller had already drawn his sword, and was cutting at the air, his face already wearing a triumphant expression, as if he felt that his victory was as good as won.

"We will throw for first cut," he suggested.

"Nay," Ralph answered, with a shake of the head; "your seniority, both in the matter of experience and years, gives ye the right."

Without further ado Colonel Spiller approached the table, and took a firm stand, his feet apart, measuring the distance with his eyes. His cavalry sabre flashed up, then descended upon the helmet with a crash, making the table creak.

"Something like a stroke, colonel," the cornet said admiringly, eyeing the line cut into the steel. "Canst beat that, sir?"

"I can try," Ralph answered coolly. "I have seen greater dents cut than that."

"Dent, ye call it!" Spiller cried savagely. "Out on thee for a poor loser! Try thy stroke, then speak!"

Ralph had meant to lose, if only to conciliate the officer, but the insulting tone of the other angered him, and he meant now to win if he could. He swung his heavy sword over his head, and brought it down full upon the helmet. There was a clank and a crash, and both helmet and table lay in halves upon the floor. The dragoon officers looked at them in amazement, hardly as yet able to believe the evidence of their eyes.

"He has ye there!" the cornet yelled, roaring with laughter.

"It is nothing, gentlemen," Ralph said hastily. "Let us have some more sack."

The sack was brought, and the officers were soon engaged in disposing of it to their satisfaction. Ralph, his example followed by Truman, emptied the contents of his mug from time to time on the floor. He grew as hilarious as any of them, but it was only feigned. One other man, too, was not drinking, although he seemed to be. That was Colonel Spiller. An angry light was in his eyes, and he watched Ralph as a cat watches a mouse, waiting for his chance to spring.

Before long the wine, added to that which they had already drunk, began to have its effect upon the officers, and one after another lay back in his chair and slept. The first, apparently, to succumb, was Colonel Spiller himself.

"Time to act," Ralph whispered, rising to his feet. "Quietly to the door, Truman, then a bolt for the horses."

"Ah, I have ye!" Spiller cried, springing to his feet. "Rebels, are ye?"

Remembering something the landlord had told him, Ralph rushed to the chair on which the arms of one of the soldiers lay, snatched up a pistol, and discharged its contents into the ceiling.

"Get that trap-door free," he said sharply to Truman, "and drop ye through."

As Ralph finished speaking, Spiller, sword in hand, leapt at him, and their blades crossed. The other officers, roused by the din, opened their eyes and looked stupidly round. Truman had already dropped beneath the table.

Acting entirely on the defensive, and keeping as near the table as possible, Ralph kept the infuriated officer at bay.

"Help, comrades!" Spiller cried fiercely, as he saw that alone he was no match for his opponent. "Kill this rebel!"

"Ready, sir?" rang out in Truman's voice.

With a quick movement of his wrist, Ralph disarmed Spiller just as the latter's comrades, roused from their stupor, were snatching up their swords. Then he dropped on his knees, darted beneath the table, and dropped through the open trap-door to the room below.

"There's a bolt, sir," the voice of the landlord said, close to his ear.

Ralph looked up at the opening, and as he did so the infuriated face of Spiller appeared. He drove his fist hard at it, and it was quickly withdrawn. The next moment he had slammed the trap-door to and pushed home the bolt.

"The horses are ready!" the landlord cried.

He spoke the truth, and a few seconds later Ralph and Truman were in the saddle.

"They'll be avenged upon ye for this, my good fellow," Ralph said hurriedly to the landlord; "we cannot leave ye to face it alone."

"Ride!" the man cried quickly.

At the same time he drew a knife from his belt, and before either of the men could stop him, had drawn it across his forehead, inflicting an ugly cut. He went white with pain, but a smile was on his lips.

"See, I tried to stop ye," he said. "Ride!"

Seeing that there was nothing for it but to obey, Ralph and Truman shook their bridles and galloped away over the cobbles. They had little fear that they would be pursued, for beyond the village were many parties of peasants marching towards Taunton, all armed in some fashion or another.

Taunton! The word had passed rapidly through the country, as Ralph knew, for the parties he and his companion had passed previously had all been on the road for the appointed trysting-place.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

"AN' who'd have thought to see John Truman ridin' to the wars this day!" Ralph's companion remarked, as they eased

their steeds up a sharp incline. They had not been pursued by the dragoon officers, and now, as evening was falling, they were within five miles of Taunton, the lights of which they could see glinting in the distance.

"It is a wise man who knows what the morrow will bring," Ralph answered. "And methinks ye are as well here as ye would be in the village."

"Ay; think not that I have grumbled," Truman said quickly, and with evident sincerity; "my hands itch to be at the knaves—the hired murderers of James II."

"And so do mine," Ralph agreed; "but ye need not fret that there will be no fighting for thee. I am too young to have seen civil war, but my father, Sir Stephen Athelney, hath seen it. Blood floweth in rivers, he hath told me; no man knoweth his enemy, or what the chance of a minute will bring."

They rode on slowly, for their horses were none too fresh, and they had no wish to enter Taunton with steeds needing a week's rest to make them fit for anything. They passed no bands of rebels pressing on to Taunton now, for those who had not already gained the city had camped by the roadside for the night. Looking back, Ralph could see their fires, and hear their voices as they lustily sang.

"What was that?" Truman said suddenly, peering into the hedge on his bridle-arm.

"Naught; what should there be?" Ralph answered carelessly. "Another couple of miles an' we shall be in Taunton."

A hundred yards ahead the road branched off into three directions, the centre path leading to Taunton, the others to small villages.

As the two horsemen approached this spot the dark form of a man and horse emerged from the shadow of a line of trees.

"A happy meeting, gentlemen," he said, in a quiet voice. "A most enchanting spot—sink me if it is not—for a little passage of arms."

Ralph handed his horse to Truman, advancing to within three yards of the man. He expected to see the usual highwayman, the reckless common type, but to his surprise this fellow bore none of the outward attributes



The galloping drew nearer, a solitary horseman flashed by, bending low on his steed's neck, then three, in the uniform of the dragoons, came charging after him. (See page 164.)

generally supposed to be possessed by the gentlemen of his profession. He was a man of medium height, slim in build, but with a grace of carriage seeming to indicate a sinewy strength. He was dressed in the Court fashion of the times, a long riding cloak edged with lace reaching to his heels. His boots, narrow in the foot and high of heel, showed signs of wear, but they were of good make. The hilt of his sword was of gold.

"I surprise ye," the man said, with a slight smile, observing Ralph's expression. "Permit me to do the honours and present myself. Sir Lawrence Lamore, banneret, your most humble servant."

"Sir Lawrence Lamore!" Ralph cried, in amazement. "Ye jest!"

"'Twould be a sorry jest," the other answered coolly; "but I marvel not that ye are surprised. Hard times, my good sir, hath brought me to this. I had thought to reap something of a harvest from the rebels bound for Taunton, but, split me, ten paltry guineas yesterday—now no more. Faith, but had I known how ill-paid the business was I should have tried something else."

"Put up thy sword, Sir Lawrence," Ralph answered, unable to suppress a smile, and sheathing his own weapon.

"Nay, nay," the other said indignantly, "I had thought to kill or be killed—the issue would be mighty indifferent to me—a gentleman of the road doth deserve better treatment than this."

"Ye seem to seek danger," Ralph answered, in surprise.

"Why not?" Lamore said bitterly. "What have I left, that I need fear to lose me life. Faith, 'tis all they have left me."

Ralph turned to Truman and drew him aside. An idea had occurred to him, but he felt bound to ask his comrade's permission before putting it into execution.

"Why not take this gentleman on with us, Truman?" he said. "He hath pluck, and Monmouth hath sore need of such men."

"Why not?" the yeoman answered readily. "This man hath but done what others of his rank have done. A brave man is a brave man, whatever else he may be."

"Sir," Ralph said quietly, turning once more to the amateur highwayman, "why

should ye not ride with us? I can promise ye use for that sword, and a life fit for a man."

Sir Lawrence Lamore displayed more energy than he had so far shown, and drew away from the tree.

"Ye ride to join Duke Monmouth?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes," Ralph answered boldly; "we shall await him at Taunton, the lights of which ye see two miles distant."

"Then, stap my vital breath, but I am with ye!" Lamore cried. "I had not thought of that. I have been considered mighty neat at sword-play. Gentlemen, may I know your names, that I may swear allegiance to ye?"

Ralph mentioned them, and the Cavalier bowed low.

"Your most humble servant, sirs," he said. "And now for Taunton. My horse'll just manage the two miles, poor brute!" He drew a small flask from one of his pistol-holsters and handed it to his new friends.

"A little drop of cordial, the last remnant of my property. Drink, gentlemen, and let the toast be—'In Monmouth's Cause!'"

Half an hour later Taunton was reached, and the three men rode slowly down the main street, threading their way through crowds of drilling men, despite the lateness of the hour. Orders, sharp and warlike, broke the stillness of the night, but above even the orders rang the harsh voices of ministers, or the roared refrain of a hymn.

"They will fight," Ralph whispered to Lamore.

"Ay, and they will," the other agreed, with a smile; "and so shall we, too. I have no cause to love our present king. A new one, say I, and may he mount the throne soon!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

JUNE the eighteenth had arrived, and with it the news that Monmouth and his army, numbering some eight thousand men, would enter Taunton early that morning. Within the city all was excitement; great preparations had been made.

Ralph, Truman, and Lamore, mounted on their horses, took up a position by the gate

Four Splendid



Find the boy's father.



Find the two Redskins.

Puzzle Pictures



Find the two men.



Find the hunter.

through which Monmouth and his men would enter, for they were anxious to see the type and number of men that he had with him. Ralph had, of course, already seen Monmouth, but the others had not.

Near to where the three men sat on their horses a fanatical preacher, mounted on a tub, his eyes blazing with a light not far short of madness, was preaching in a loud, harsh voice. One sentence reached Ralph, and he started and stared at the man.

"What want ye with kings?" the man cried.

"Mighty near treason that," Lamore remarked carelessly, flicking a speck or two of dust from his cloak. "Think ye we should stop his ranting tongue?"

"Nay," Ralph answered hastily. "The men will fight for Monmouth none the less staunchly despite that fanatic's words."

"Look!" Truman cried, touching Ralph on the arm—"Monmouth!"

As Truman spoke a burst of cheering broke from the men and women crowding the windows above. The army was in sight. The head of it was descending the hill a mile from the city gates, and it was quite possible to discern Monmouth, surrounded by a smiling body of horsemen, riding ahead of the army, the men of which were marching six abreast, their banners waving right bravely.

"There must be a great number, think ye?" Ralph said eagerly.

"Not more than eight to ten thousand, my friend," Lamore answered coolly. "Numbers are deceptive at a distance."

When the army had advanced to within half a mile of the gate it halted, and Monmouth and his party, the former bare-headed, came galloping on alone.

"A right royal figure," Truman said enthusiastically.

"May he fight well; I ask no more!" Lamore growled between his teeth. "There are various tales o' this man's nature. Some hath seen him brave as a lion, others hath known him play the coward to perfection."

So far as Monmouth's appearance was

concerned there was little lacking. He was in his thirty-sixth year, and he sat his horse with all the grace of an accomplished horseman. His face was white and thin—naturally, not through ill-health—and his great curled wig accentuated the pallor. He was dressed sumptuously, as befitted his kingly rank, his back and breast plates being of silver and inlaid with gold, while his sword-hilt was crowned by a great gem.

Cheer after cheer rang out as this gallant person rode towards the gate with his escort close behind him, and reined up in the opening. The Mayor of Taunton, an old man of the name of Master Lucas Fairgood, approached and sank on one knee, offering an address as he did so.

"I thank thee!" Monmouth cried in a high, clear voice, "and I thank ye all, citizens, for this welcome." He motioned Master Fairgood to rise. "I see ye have some more brave men for me, good Master Mayor."

"Nigh upon four thousand, your Majesty," the old man answered, with a glow of pride; "many trained to the use of arms."

"Ye have done well," Monmouth said, with a smile. "We shall not forget our friends when we are safe upon the throne."

"His family were always main ready with promises," Lamore whispered to Ralph, "but not so apt to keep them."

Monmouth had now drawn aside. A man amongst his escort raised his sword, and the army advanced towards the gate, swinging along six abreast, with some little show of order. First came the horse, very few in number, some of the men in armour, others ready to meet the foe with nothing but their good swords to protect them. Nevertheless, their appearance raised a hearty cheer from the citizens of Taunton. Next came the foot, and a strange mixture of men they were.

Last of all came the waggons and carts, some holding ammunition and food, others bearing the personal belongings of the soldiers. It was impossible for all these to enter the city, and they took up a position before its half-ruined walls.

All had passed, and Monmouth, his Cavaliers behind him, rode through the gate of the city. Ralph and his comrades raised

their swords to the salute as he passed, and were favoured with a slight bow and an approving glance.

A sharp grip on his arm caused Ralph to face round upon Truman.

"Look," the latter whispered—"the fanatical preacher!"

Ralph turned his eyes in the man's direction, and as he did so he saw him spring from his tub with the agility of a monkey and land clean behind Monmouth, bestraddling the horse with his long legs. He held a bludgeon in his hand, and raised it high above his head.

"Kings shall perish!" he shrieked, "and the righteous rule the righteous in this chosen land!"

Saying this, he aimed a blow at Monmouth's head which would certainly have killed him, had he not just at that moment leaned forward in his saddle, and the bludgeon fell harmlessly on to his back-plate. Again it was raised, but before it could be used again, this time probably with more effect, Ralph had urged his horse forward, his sword flashed from its scabbard, and the madman fell back from the horse.

Monmouth turned his head sharply and saw what had happened. The whole affair had taken place so quickly that it was difficult to realise that the attempt had been made at all.

"Ah, 'tis you, Master Athelney," Monmouth said, with a smile. "This is the second time ye have served us. We thank thee. Ride with the escort; ye must join my officers."

"And my friends, your Majesty?" Ralph asked boldly.

"Thy friends are my friends," Monmouth answered, with a bow. "Let them join our person, too. We go to hold counsel in the church, and shall be glad of thy advice."

Ralph and his comrades obeyed the order, and rode down the street behind Monmouth. They halted before the square old church of Taunton, and the whole party dismounted. There were men of many nationalities among the escort, but French outnumbered the rest. Dr. Ferguson and Wade kept close to the king as they entered the church.

The interior of the building had been cleared of the benches used by the worshippers, and a

series of tables ran down the centre, forms placed by them. At the head of the farthest table a raised chair had been placed, and in this Monmouth took his seat, Dr. Ferguson on his right and Wade on his left.

"My friends," Monmouth said, in a clear voice, "I am glad to see ye here, ready to uphold me in this just cause. There are documents for me, good Master Mayor."

The mayor produced a bundle of letters and placed them before Monmouth, who tore them open and glanced quickly at their contents. As he read the last his pale face flushed with pleasure.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "we have good news for ye. Sir James Strangeways, whose castle lies ten miles from here, hath five hundred arms at our disposal—petronels, fowling-pieces, and others. We have but to fetch them away! Ay, and we must make all good speed. There is much work to be done. Time taketh wings against us, and the enemy is massing his forces on the plain of Sedgemoor. Let the arms be fetched from yonder castle, and we will hasten on our way."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

BRIDGWATER was reached, and Monmouth and his troops were received with open arms, all that the town held being at their disposal. But little time was wasted, and all through the day Monmouth and his council sat, discussing plans for the future. Only a few miles away, encamped upon the plain of Sedgemoor, lay King James's troops, considerably outnumbering their opponents, and, moreover, all well armed and accustomed to war by long training.

By ten that night the men had fallen in, their officers at their head, and all was ready for the attack. Ralph and his regiment, and two more regiments of cavalry, were to advance in the van, so that at the given moment they might charge into the enemy's camp.

At eleven to the minute Monmouth, mounted on a powerful horse, galloped down the line, and a buzz of welcome broke from the rough soldiers. His face was hard and set, which could hardly be wondered at, for on the night depended all. By the morrow he would be on a fair way to mounting

the throne of England or he would be no better than a hunted fugitive.

Orders were issued in low tones, and the army left Bridgwater, striking across the Parrot and on to the bare plains on the other side. Ralph, leading the way with his cavalry, advanced very slowly, for here and there the plain was cut by great ditches, used for draining the ground, and the bridges spanning them were inconveniently narrow. At last, however, they had all been crossed, and a mile ahead the lights of the enemy's fires shone dimly through the misty night. Ralph glanced back at the great line of men stretching out on either side. The ground was soft, and the shuffling of the thousands of feet sounded only faintly.

So far all had gone well, and there seemed every reason to believe that the surprise would be effected. Ralph spurred his horse and cantered to where Lamore and Truman rode at the head of their men.

"When the order comes," he said, in a low voice, "charge. And mark this, both of ye. Should the fight go against us we stick together, die together if need be, or escape together."

"We'll win, Ralph," Lamore answered, in a whisper, "but I shall remember."

Ralph cantered back to his men, and they drew nearer and nearer to the enemy's fires, until they sparkled not four hundred yards ahead. From time to time Ralph turned his head towards the spot where Monmouth rode, waiting impatiently for the order that was to convert the slow advance into a reckless charge.

At last! A bugle rang out shrilly, others answering it.

"Charge!" Ralph cried, and set spurs to his horse.

Over the uneven ground the cavalry charged, making straight for the line of fire, across which dark forms were moving hurriedly. Cries of alarm rose from the enemy's camp. The surprise was complete. Before the soldiers would be fully aroused many of them would have fallen, and the rest, alarmed by the fate of their comrades, would——

Of a sudden, with a force that nearly brought him to the ground, Ralph reined in his horse, throwing him back upon his haunches. His

men followed his example—all save two, who, charging on, fell with a loud splash into the ditch which stretched right across the path of the advancing troops.

“On, on!” officers, who could not guess why the troops in front of them had halted, yelled. “On! It is our chance!”

Ralph thrust his horse right to the edge of the ditch, and peered across it. It was fully fifteen yards wide; too great a jump to be expected of the horses. The bugles were ringing out in the camp of the enemy, and already Ralph and his men could see dark forms on the opposite bank.

“Have ye such a thing as a bridge about ye?” Lamore cried coolly, not the least moved by the unexpected check the advance had received, and addressing a tall figure which showed dimly on the other side of the ditch. “Split me, but this is most infernally annoying; I had quite thought to have the killing o’ ye by now.”

The only answer to this was a pistol-bullet, which, luckily, did no more harm than to graze Lamore’s left wrist.

“Just ye wait till I come over,” he cried, “and ye shall receive greater interest than any rascally money-lender would ask.”

“Down on your faces, lads!” Ralph cried, as a line of men appeared on the opposite bank.

Hardly had he spoken before a volley screamed out; the night was lit by bright flashes of light, and the battle had begun in deadly earnest.

An officer galloped wildly up to Ralph, his face pale with excitement.

“Hath the surprise failed?” he asked sharply.

“Ay,” Ralph answered between his teeth; “this ditch hath thrown aside our plans.”

“Then take your men to the left flank; only the foot are of use here. Be ready to stop the enemy’s cavalry if they charge. Monmouth doth think they will ford this place higher up, then charge down upon us.”

The officer galloped away. Ralph gave the order to his men to mount, and they forced their way along on the flank. This was no easy matter, for the foot soldiers had reached the edge of the ditch, and now packed it

closely. At last, however, clear ground was reached, and there Ralph halted with his cavalry, unable to do anything but watch the progress of the fight. Soon, nevertheless, he was to have his fill of fighting, with a vengeance.

“They’re at it in right good earnest now!” Lamore cried, waving his sword towards the ditch. “Look! The enemy are massed on yonder bank, firing volley after volley.”

“Ay, and our brave fellows return it just as steadily,” Truman answered sharply. “The surprise hath failed; but they mean to fight for Monmouth none the less stoutly.”

“May it avail them aught,” Ralph said between his teeth.

“What mean ye?” Lamore asked quickly, turning towards him.

“Just this. We are here, a matter of close upon a thousand mounted men; but how many, think ye, have the enemy?”

“How should I know?”

“Five thousand! In all probability they will be down upon us ere the dawn, and then——”

“Glorious!” Lamore cried. “It will be glorious—even to die!”

The air was now full of the smell of powder. The discharge of the guns was so continuous that it had become one deafening roar, and the flashes of light darted everywhere like shooting stars.

Ralph, unable to restrain his anxiety, left his troop under the command of Lamore and Truman, and galloped down to the fighting line. He found the men who were armed with any kind of firearm lining the edge of the ditch, two deep, spitting bullets into their guns, and firing with the steadiness of the finest soldiers in the world. Behind them lay a line of wounded, attended to by pikemen. All were as cool as ice, and there could be little doubt that they would hold their own against the enemy, unless—that was the one weak point—unless the cavalry charged on the flank. Ralph wheeled his horse and galloped back to his men. Truman and Lamore waited him anxiously.

“Methought I heard the jingle of harness yonder,” he cried, pointing to the left. “Surely the cavalry cannot have got across yet?”

With straining ears Ralph bent sideways in the saddle, trying to hear something more than the deafening report of the guns. As he did so a bugle rang out sharply, sounding the charge. He turned sharply to the officer of the nearest regiment.

"Form your men into squares, sir!" he cried sharply.

"The cavalry are upon us!" He turned back to his men, spurring his horse until he was at their head.

"Charge!" he cried. "Let us meet them half-way!"

The men needed no further bidding. Spurs were thrust home, faces shone with fierce excitement; never did men ride so willingly to their death. It was five hundred against at least four times that number; yet the smaller troop rode as if certain of victory.

With a crash the two forces met, and the



Ralph looked up at the opening, and, as he did so, the infuriated face of Spiller appeared. He drove his fist hard at it, and it was quickly withdrawn. The next moment the trapdoor was slammed to, and the bolt pushed home. (See page 172.)

shock was so great that a score of horses went down. No man thought of guarding; it was slash and thrust, thrust and slash, with one object on both sides.

Ralph, the light of battle in his eyes, wielded his great sword with deadly effect, and so fierce was his onslaught that he positively hewed his way through the enemy. Close behind him rode Truman and Lamore,

both doing their share of the fighting right well. Not a man of the inexperienced cavalry flinched. Though they fell fast before the overpowering numbers of the enemy, yet not one of them died before leaving his mark upon his foe.

For ten minutes the fight raged with terrible fury; but at the end of that time the enemy had cut their way through, and were charging down upon the foot. Ralph shouted fierce orders.

"Keep the men together!" he cried to

Lamore and Truman; "we must charge back to the help of the foot!"

Orders rang out, and the cavalry formed up as well as it might. It was a terrible sight; five hundred men had ridden in the charge, but now little more than one hundred remained, and practically every man amongst these was wounded, some so severely that only will-power kept them in the saddle.

"Back!" Ralph shouted. "Another blow for Monmouth!"

A cheer answered Ralph, and the men swept along behind him, ready for the worst. The foot, each man fighting like ten, had been broken up by the cavalry, and were now fighting in little groups, a pile of dead and dying before them. Ralph's men split up now, every one singling out his man and fighting him.

Ralph, Lamore, and Truman kept well together, riding here and there, imploring, helping, ordering, although they saw plainly enough that the fight was lost. The firing of their men had grown less continuous, and they guessed rightly that the ammunition was giving out.

Daybreak!

As the light of day grew stronger it revealed a spectacle warranted to shake the strongest nerves. All about the plain lay heaps of dead, while along the ditch they seemed to lie in one long line that had no end. Here and there small knots of haggard men were still fighting, surrounded by cavalry.

Ralph looked round sharply, seeking Monmouth. It was not long before he found him, the centre of a small knot of horse and foot, warding off the attack of a score of the enemy's cavalry.

"To the rescue!" Ralph cried, his one idea being to save Monmouth, and charged with his two friends towards the spot. The three horsemen, mainly by the fury of their onslaught, managed to turn the tide of war in their favour for a moment.

"Get thee gone, friends!" Monmouth cried hoarsely, as he recognised Ralph and the others; "save your lives while there is yet time."

"Not unless we save thine, sir," Ralph answered boldly.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

MONMOUTH looked round sadly, saw the small groups of men who still fought, and realised the terrible truth—the day was lost.

"I shall die with these brave fellows," he said fiercely. "Let me but slay one more of these paid murderers!"

"Nay, your Majesty," an old officer broke in, "escape. While ye live ye may come into thine own. Dead—what is left but the grave?"

"Ye are right!" Monmouth answered, his pale face flushing for a moment. "I am with ye, Athelney; lead the way."

Ralph spurred his horse, and galloped across the field of battle, Monmouth and his two friends close behind him. He hoped that in the excitement the enemy would not be able to distinguish them from their own friends, and so give them a chance to get away. He turned in the saddle and addressed Monmouth and the others.

"Loose your breast and back plates as ye ride," he commanded. "Once we have left this place we must have no look of the soldier about us."

At midday Ralph called a halt, which was much needed by both horses and men, at the side of a small stream.

Monmouth, to make his disguise more complete, ripped most of the gold lace from his garments, and so robbed them of their royally rich appearance. For three hours did the four men rest beside the stream, the pangs of hunger reminding them that it was many hours since they had eaten. At the end of that time Ralph gave the order to mount, and once more they proceeded on their way. Night fell, and they entered a small village, but dared not halt. Bread was bought, and they ate it as they jogged on through the village. Many a curious eye was turned upon them, but they did not notice it.

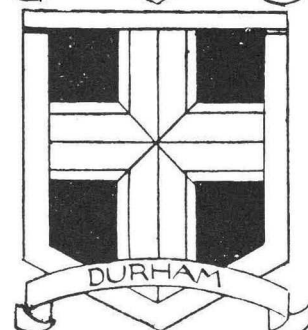
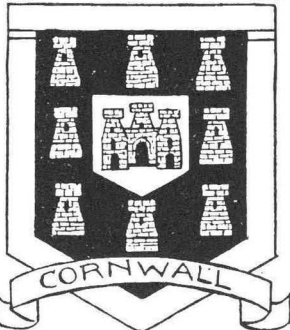
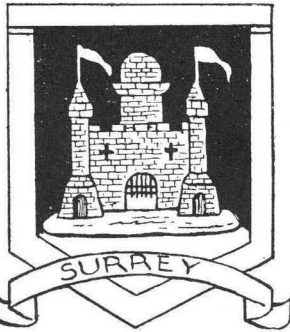
"By to-morrow night, sire," Ralph said, as they jogged along a road bordered on both sides by trees, "we shall be at my father's castle. Ye will be safe there."

"As ye will," Monmouth answered sadly. "Truth, but I have little wish to live."

COUNTY CRESTS

No. 1.

Is your County represented on this page?



Suddenly, without the slightest warning, Ralph pulled up his horse.

"Hist!" he whispered.

The others followed his example, and sat perfectly still, listening. From some distance away came the rapid beat of hoofs and the jangle of harness.

"Cavalry," Ralph said shortly. "Can they be on our track?"

"Like as not," Lamore answered carelessly.

"How many, think ye, are they in number?"

"Six or eight," Ralph said, after listening intently for a minute or so; "we had best push on. See to it that your pistols are loaded. If it comes to a fight we must be ready. They may have put them upon our track back at the village."

"Fight it will be," Truman said hoarsely. "Our poor nags could scarce gallop, whatever the danger might be."

The four men jogged on again in silence, listening to the beat of the hoofs, which every moment was drawing nearer. It was a moon-light night, but on this tree-shaded road the light shone only in patches. Ralph rode with his ears on the alert, waiting impatiently for the moment when the horsemen would come into view. There was just the chance that they might be fugitives from Monmouth's army, but it was unlikely.

Seven horsemen, riding in a close body, swept into view, and Ralph recognised, as they passed a patch of light, the uniform of the dragoons.

"Halt!" The order rang out sharply, and was accompanied by a pistol bullet, which passed unpleasantly near to Truman. The latter pulled a pistol from his holster, and was about to answer the shot, when Ralph gripped his wrist.

"Not yet," he commanded sternly. "We must get a gallop from our nags until we reach a likelier spot for a fight. Do not spare your horses now. Our lives depend on't."

Urged on by spur and voice, the horses quickened their pace to a gallop, and, for a short time at least, drew away from the pursuers. But that it could not last long every one of the four men knew, for their horses were near foundered.

As he rode on Ralph looked eagerly to right

and left. Round a bend in the road they swept, the lines of trees ceased, and on either side stretched level grass land.

"Halt!" Ralph cried sharply. "Do ye, sire, and ye, Lamore, take your stand on the left side, back from the road, that ye may not be observed; Truman and myself will take the right. Have your pistols ready, and do not fire until I give the word. We cannot spare these men. Our own safety depends upon it."

Monmouth and Lamore urged their horses to the left, Ralph and Truman went to the right. The whole of the four held their pistols ready, cocking them over their left elbows to make more certain of their aim.

Nearer and nearer drew the clatter of the cavalry, and the waiting men set their teeth. The soldiers were riding boldly forward, little thinking of the surprise in store for them. With a rush they passed the fringe of trees.

"Fire!" Ralph shouted.

Four pistols flashed out together, and four of the soldiers fell from their horses. Every ball had accounted for his man.

"The others must not escape!" Ralph cried. "At them!"

Urging their horses to one more effort, Monmouth and his three staunch supporters charged at the remaining soldiers, who had wheeled their horses round.

"Surrender, rebels!" their leader cried savagely, "or your lives shall pay the forfeit!"

"Remain behind, sire," Ralph said coolly, turning to Monmouth; "they shall have fair play."

Ralph, singling out the officer, charged at him, his sword raised. The weapons of the two men met, and a fierce fight followed. The officer, maddened by the fall of his men, fought with the ferocity of a tiger, and it was all that Ralph could do at first to guard the rapid cuts and thrusts. But the officer's fury very soon commenced to tell its tale, and Ralph assumed the offensive, driving the man hard. His chance came, his sword thrust sharply forward, and the man reeled from his horse, a gaping wound in his neck.

Now that his adversary was done with Ralph turned to see how his companions were faring, and as he did so he saw Truman reel

from his horse, wounded in the shoulder. The dragoon who had administered the wound bent from his saddle to finish off his fallen foe, but before he could do so Ralph had charged to the rescue. To strike the man dead from behind was not Ralph's nature. He passed his sword to his bridal hand, and his right, clenched hard, struck the man behind the ear, sending him stunned and senseless to the ground. At the same moment Lamore dropped his man.

"We must ride on, sire," Ralph said, riding up to Monmouth. "The country swarms with such men as these. We shall not be safe until my father's castle is reached."

"And even then?" Monmouth queried, with a bitter smile.

"It shall be no fault of mine if ye do not escape the country," Ralph answered shortly.

Till daybreak the little party rode on, then they were forced to halt to rest their horses. During the day they pressed on again at a little faster than a walk, keeping as much as possible off the roads, and by evening Athelney Castle was in sight. Until night had fallen the four men loitered in the park, deeming it wiser to make their entrance under cover of the night.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

SIR STEPHEN ATHELNEY sat alone in the great hall, his head bowed in his hands; his arms resting on the table. From time to time his lips moved.

"Defeat," he muttered bitterly, "and after we have waited so long. Ah, Ralph, Ralph, shall I ever see thee again?"

An old servant entered the room with quiet step and touched his master on the shoulder.

"What want ye, Simon?" Sir Stephen demanded, almost angrily. "Canst not see I am in no mood to be disturbed?"

"There are those who would see ye, Sir Stephen," the man answered, a smile on his face.

"Tell them I will not," the old man answered quickly. "Treat them well, Simon, but do not disturb me."

"Ye had better see them, sir," the servant persisted.

Sir Stephen looked into the man's face, and something there brought the blood tingling to his hollow cheeks.

"Not Ralph?" he gasped. "The lad is safe? Tell me, quick!"

Before the servant could answer, Ralph himself, followed by his three companions, stepped into the hall. The old man embraced his son eagerly, with tears in his eyes, then bowed courteously to the others.

"These gentlemen?" he queried.

"Sir Lawrence Lamore," Ralph answered readily, "and Master Truman—both stout soldiers of the fallen cause."

"And the other, Ralph?"

"King Monmouth!"

With a cry of joy Sir Stephen sank on his knee before Monmouth.

"Welcome to Athelney Castle, sire!" he said, in a shaking voice. "Little had I thought to see my king once more."

"A king?" Monmouth answered bitterly, at the same time raising Sir Stephen. "A king without a throne, without a country, without an army, and without a guinea—a hunted fugitive, holding to his life frailly by the aid of his trusty friends. Yes, if a king can be in such straits, then am I still a king."

"Enough, sire!" Ralph interrupted sharply. "None must know, not even the servants, who ye really are. Father, remember, this is Sir George Fairwell. Now, canst order dinner, for we are nigh famished?"

Within ten minutes a bountiful meal had been spread, and Monmouth and his comrades were very soon doing full justice to it. When the latter had somewhat appeased his appetite he turned to Ralph.

"What, think ye, must be our next move, friend?" he asked.

"That ye may leave to me, sir—Sir George," Sir Stephen answered quickly. "I have known for some time that if this effort to place ye on the throne failed I should be compelled to flee the country. I have a lugger waiting a day's ride from here. Tomorrow we can set out to join it, and I shall go with ye."

"Good!"

The clatter of horses' hoofs on cobbles caused the men to spring to their feet, their

THE BALLAD OF THE POSTAL ORDER

By JOHNNY BULL

Billy Bunter was a citizen
Of "credit" and renown;
He called on me one sunny day
And borrowed half-a-crown.
He promised me right faithfully
That he would play the game,
And pay it back most promptly, when
His postal-order came!

I waited for a week or so,
And then my anger grew;
Quoth Bunter: "It's delayed, you know.
The postman's down with 'flu!"

I waited till the end of term;
Said Bunter: "It's no catch!
The titled cove who's sending it
Is now in Colney Hatch!"

When holidays were past and gone,
I called for my half-crown;
But Bunter said: "I'm sorry, John,
I've left my quids in town!"

I waited on for many moons,
And so fed-up was I
That each time Bunter came in sight
He got a damaged eye!

That postal-order grew a beard,
It grew side-whiskers, too!
And to my long-lost half-a-crown
I sadly bade adieu!

Then dawned a day of dire alarms,
Deep in my mind it sticks.
The chap who kept the Bunter Arms
Sent Billy two-and-six!

"'Tis mine! 'Tis mine!" I fondly cried.
"Deliver up the loot!
Just hand that half-a-crown to me,
Old barrel-face, and scoot!"

So Bunter, weeping tears of blood,
Gave up the half-a-crown;
I placed it in my study, and
Walked off with Rake and Brown.

We went to Mrs. Mible's shop,
And planned a stunning spread;
We ordered cakes and ginger-pop:
"My treat!" I proudly said.

But in the study, that same night,
I gave a sudden yell;
For that post had vanished, quite,
And Bunter had, as well!

hands on their swords. A terrified servant rushed into the room.

"The soldiers!" he cried, in a trembling voice.

"We have been followed!" Monmouth ejaculated, whipping out his sword.

"Nay; 'tis probably but chance," Sir Stephen answered quickly, speaking in Monmouth's ear. "There are many such parties in the neighbourhood, and more than one hath been quartered here before. Sit ye down, sire, and sheathe thy sword."

As Monmouth and his friends seated themselves a big, burly man, dressed as an officer, clanked into the room and stared round sharply. He singled out Sir Stephen, and advanced to him, a paper in his hand.

"Sir Stephen Athelney?" he demanded, in a harsh, commanding voice.

"At your service."

"Good; 'tis as well. I have his most gracious Majesty's order here to quarter my men upon ye so long as they remain in this neighbourhood."

"How many men are with ye?" Sir Stephen asked coldly.

"A matter of a score."

"They shall be attended to. Meanwhile, ye see food and drink upon the table; it is at thy service."

From time to time, between his intervals of eating and drinking, the officer looked, with insolent carelessness, at Monmouth and his two companions.

"A strange time for Sir Stephen to entertain his friends," he said, a sneering note in his voice, as he tilted back his chair.

"His house is his own," Ralph answered, with difficulty suppressing his anger.

"There ye are wrong, my young friend, and ye may take the word of Colonel Peter Norfell for it," the soldier answered insolently; "it is his Majesty's, more especially when its owner's loyalty hath been doubted. His son, it is said, did join the traitor Monmouth."

He looked keenly at the men before him, noticing the swords at their sides, and the signs of travel upon their boots and dress.

"Ye have seen naught of the war?"

"What war?" Truman answered shortly.

"Faith, but ye have hit it!" Norfell cried,

laughing boisterously. "War, did I call it. Truth, but the breaking of a rabble from its camping-ground. What could such copped knaves do against his Majesty's soldiers? As much use as that-slim sword ye carry, sir, would be against my blade."

Monmouth, who had been drumming his fingers upon the table, fixed his calm eyes upon the soldier.

"Mayhap it could do as good service," he answered coolly; "'tis the skill that tells."

"Ye insult me!" Colonel Norfell roared, leaping to his feet. "The sword of a soldier hath its skill. Mark ye there, or I'll teach ye the truth of it in some stronger way!"

"Nay, I did but say that skill won the day."

"Wouldst dare to pit thy skill against mine?" Norfell cried, his face aflame with anger.

"Why not?" Monmouth answered coolly, rising in his turn.

"Ye could want no better place than this in which to show your skill."

"And ye shall see it," Norfell answered, whipping out his sword. "Push back the table."

While Truman obeyed, Ralph rose and whispered in Monmouth's ear.

"Ye must not do this, sire," he said.

"Nay, but I must," Monmouth answered, with determination. "This braggart shall learn his lesson at my hands."

The table had by this time been pulled back to the wall, and the floor of the hall lay bare.

Monmouth drew his thin sword and calmly walked into the centre.

"We need no seconds, sir," he said haughtily, "in an affair in which 'tis but an exhibition of skill."

"He who draws first blood to be the winner?" Colonel Norfell queried, as he took his stand facing Monmouth.

"As ye will, sir."

At that moment Sir Stephen returned, and a look of horror crossed his face as he saw what was about to happen.

"This must stop, gentlemen," he said quickly.

"Hold thy tongue!" Norfell commanded instantly.

"Let it proceed, Sir Stephen," Monmouth added quietly.

The swords crossed, and the clang of them rang through the hall. Norfell attacked furiously, obviously with the intention of beating down the other's guard or snapping his slender blade. But Monmouth caught all



Two men, dressed as Cavaliers, stood on guard before the door. They drew their swords as Ralph approached. "I have urgent business with his Majesty," Ralph said quietly. (See page 165.)

the strokes close to the hilt of his weapon with the greatest of ease, and the soldier's face darkened with fury. His strokes fell faster than ever, but in his anger he paid little heed to his defence. Monmouth's sword darted forward, and pierced the man's sword-arm, slitting it from wrist to the elbow.

Faint from the shock of the wound, Norfell dropped to the ground, his sword falling from his hand. Monmouth knelt beside him, and examined the wounded arm.

"A scratch," he said quietly, "no more."

With hate in his eyes Norfell looked up at Monmouth's quiet face, then down until his gaze rested on the slender hands, on one of the fingers of which a ring sparkled. Monmouth saw the glance, and withdrew his hand hastily, but too late.

"Monmouth!" Norfell cried hoarsely, his face wild with triumph, and leapt to his feet.

His lips opened to give the alarm; but at the same moment Ralph gripped him by the throat and forced him back against the panelled wall.

"Bind him," he said quickly, glancing over his shoulder at Truman, "and gag him."

A handkerchief was thrust into the officer's mouth, and made secure by another fastened at the back of his head. A belt was passed round his body, pinning his arms to his side, and his ankles were bound with a scarf. The man lay helpless in the presence of the man whom he would have given so much to capture.

Leaving Norfell on the floor, Monmouth and the others drew away to the farther end of the room.

"What can we do now?" Ralph queried.

"It has but hastened things, my son," Sir Stephen replied quietly. "We must ride at once for the coast. I can trust old Simon; wait ye here while I get the horses saddled. Guard the door, and let no man enter."

"That I should bring ye to this, good friends," Monmouth said bitterly. "Fate hath played me a scurvy trick; but why should ye suffer?"

"Because ye are our king," Sir Stephen answered quietly, then hurried from the hall.

Monmouth seated himself moodily at the table, and Ralph and Truman stationed themselves one on either side of the door, their

drawn swords in their hands, ready to act at a moment's notice. A day's ride and they might all be safe, and life is not so mean a thing that either Ralph or Truman meant to part with it easily. Lamore leant idly against the wall, yet with a watchful eye upon Colonel Norfell.

A step in the passage made Ralph advance to the doorway. It was only Sir Stephen, now garbed ready for his ride.

"All is ready," he said quietly. "Simon hath taken the horses to the park, and I have money enough to see us safe out of this country. Follow me closely, and make not a sound as ye value your lives."

The little band of men passed out of the hall, leaving Norfell to glare helplessly at their retreating forms, and struggle vainly to free himself of his bonds.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

THE castle was left in safety, and the horses reached. Monmouth leapt lightly into the saddle, and the others quickly followed his example.

"It'll be a stiff ride, sire," Sir Stephen said earnestly, "for soon the officer will be discovered, and ye will have the whole pack in pursuit."

"Nay, we shall be safe by then, my friend," Monmouth answered lightly.

Sir Stephen, born and bred in the neighbourhood, led the way at a swinging canter. All the party had been supplied with fresh horses, and they had little fear that they would not reach the coast by early the next morning. At an hour after midnight they clattered over the cobbles of the village of Penhurst, and by then half their journey had been accomplished.

Monmouth, who had been riding moodily along, suddenly turned his head upon his shoulder.

"They pursue already," he said sharply.

"I think not, sire," Lamore, who had also caught the sound, answered; "it is but one man."

"We had best wait, then," Ralph suggested; "he may be from the castle with news."

The horsemen reined up, their horses stretching across the road, so that none could

pass. The beat of the hoofs drew rapidly nearer, and a solitary horseman came into sight, bending low on his horse's neck. So hard did he ride that he only caught sight of the obstacle in his path when about twenty yards distant. He reined in hastily, throwing his powerful horse back on its haunches.

"Let me pass, sirs," he cried quickly; "I ride on a mission of life and death."

"And ye do not recognise your master, Simon?" Sir Stephen answered.

"Heaven be praised!" the man ejaculated; "I rode to tell ye the dragoons are on your track. I got off while they were saddling their horses."

"What of that?" Ralph said. "How can they tell the road we have taken?"

"They have a bloodhound with them, sir," Simon answered hoarsely.

"A bloodhound!" Monmouth cried fiercely. "Am I not more than a slave, that they hunt me down with dogs? Faith, but civilisation is a tricky word, and hath many meanings."

"Ye must ride on," Simon said quickly. "Hark! Hear ye not the clatter of the hoofs already?"

Yes, faint and distant, but still quite distinct, came the clatter of many hoofs. The dragoons were in hot pursuit. Sir Stephen set spurs to his horse and swept on, with his companions close behind him. Simon set his horse at the hedge that bordered the road, for he had no wish to meet the soldiers on his homeward journey.

"We need have no fear on such horses as these," Truman said coolly; "we'll be well at sea before they reach the coast."

For an hour the horsemen galloped on, and the sounds of pursuit drew no nearer. Another two hours at the most, and they reckoned to be at the spot where the lugger was waiting.

Of a sudden a hare darted across the road, right in front of the horses. Monmouth's steed reared, plunged forward, and came heavily to his knees, shooting his rider over his head. The horse scrambled up again, and Truman snatched at the bridle before he could bolt, but Monmouth lay quite still.

Ralph slipped from the saddle, threw his bridle over his left arm, and knelt beside Monmouth. The fallen duke had sustained

a nasty cut on the head, and was stunned. What was to be done? Every second the dragoons were drawing nearer, led by the unerring instinct of the bloodhound, and here was the most important man of all rendered senseless, while his horse was so lamed that it was more than likely that he would go down again if hard pressed.

Lamore, too, had dismounted, and now stood over Monmouth, peering down quietly at his ghastly face.

"He must be moved," he said quietly. "Help me to put him on my horse."

Not as yet understanding Lamore's motive, Ralph helped to place the senseless man on the former's horse, Truman and Sir Stephen holding him there. Lamore quietly took the bridle of the injured horse and turned to Ralph.

"Monmouth's signet," he said quietly, "give it to me."

"And why?" Ralph asked, in surprise.

"Because I am now Monmouth."

The answer was given in a calm, level voice, which had not the slightest tremor of excitement in it.

"You mean that——" Ralph started sharply.

"I mean that Monmouth must be saved. It hath been said that I favour him. Give me the ring; then ride ye on, I shall follow."

"But ye cannot escape on that lame brute?"

"But Monmouth can on mine." Lamore quietly drew the ring from Monmouth's finger and slipped it on to one of his own. The sound of the pursuing soldiers was drawing very near, and it was obvious to all that there was not a moment to be lost.

"Let me stay instead," Ralph said eagerly.

"Or I," Truman added. "I am but a plain yeoman—none would miss me."

"Nay," Lamore answered calmly. "I thank ye; but I stay. Neither of you favour Monmouth. Ride, or else ye make my sacrifice of no value—ride!"

For a moment Ralph hesitated. Then he realised that Lamore spoke the truth, and that there was no other way of saving Monmouth. He bent down and shook his friend's hand warmly.

"As ye will, Lamore," he said hoarsely. "But, mark me, I shall come back for ye."

"Save Monmouth; then do as ye will."

Ralph, his father, and Truman, supporting the unconscious Monmouth between them, galloped away, leaving Lamore standing by the side of his lame horse. He listened to the sounds of pursuit, now very near indeed, and swung into the saddle.

"Faith, but they must not take me too easily," he muttered, "or they might suspect the trick!"

He swung into the saddle, and, at the risk of a bad fall, spurred the lame horse into a canter. Not more than a mile ahead a dim light or two indicated the position of a village. As Lamore noticed this an idea occurred to him. He would reach this place, demand admission at some inn door, leave his horse tethered outside—to act as a bait—then await the coming of the soldiers. He had no fear of death; but he had every intention of robbing King James of a soldier or two more before he himself went under.

Chancing the fall, Lamore spurred the horse on, and the sounds of pursuit only drew slowly nearer. He reached the village, which was in total darkness, save for a dim light or two in some of the upper windows, probably rooms where nervous children slept. At one point a beam of wood stretched clean across the road, and from the centre of it hung a creaking board, bearing the words "Royal Inn."

Lamore slipped from his horse, fastened the bridle to a ring let into one of the doorposts of the inn, and knocked loudly on the door. In five minutes the soldiers would arrive.

There was no answer to the summons, and Lamore beat upon the door a second time, using boot and sword with great effect. A window right above the door swung open with a complaining squeak, and a nightcapped head was thrust out.

"What want ye?" the owner of the nightcap quavered. "We are closed for the night!"

"Then ye must open again!" Lamore answered fiercely. He could hear the pursuers coming rapidly nearer. In the street he would be ridden down before he could strike

a blow; but in the inn passage he knew that he would be able to render a better account of himself.

"Are ye opening, or must I break the door down? Split me, but I am in no mood for trifling."

"One moment, good gentleman, one moment!" the landlord answered hastily. "I will come down. Ye shall have no cause for complaint. But in these times of blood and—"

"Enough!" Lamore interrupted. "Come down!"

In another couple of minutes the soldiers would be there. Already Lamore could hear the faint baying of the bloodhound, and as he did so he drew one of his pistols from the saddle-holster.

"The brute shall not live to carry on the pursuit," he muttered.

The door of the inn opened, and Lamore stepped quickly in.

"Ye may leave the door open," he said coolly. "Hark ye, my friends draw near!"

"But ye will come through to the room, sir," the landlord said; "a fire hath but half died there."

"Nay; get ye gone," Lamore answered sternly, "if ye would save thy fat body!"

With a howl of terror the landlord bolted for the stairs, and Lamore heard the lock of a door turned sharply and the bolts thrust home. But he had little time to spare for such things. The clatter of hoofs was already loud on the cobbles.

"Halt!" The order rang out sharp and clear. Lamore smiled; his bait had caught its fish.

He slipped his sword into the leg of his right boot, and took careful aim with his pistol, resting the long barrel on his crooked left elbow. He was none too soon. A dark form, large as a calf, darkened the open doorway. For a moment Lamore saw a great hanging jaw, a pair of fierce, small eyes, and snarling teeth. His finger pressed the trigger of his pistol, and, with a howl of pain, the bloodhound sank to the ground.

One enemy—perhaps the one to be the most feared—was dead, but others followed quickly. Into the passage sprang a soldier,

evidently an officer, from his uniform. He thrust savagely forward with his sword, but Lamore dodged the stroke skilfully. Two others followed this man, and Lamore found himself parrying the lunges of three men. Luckily for him the passage was narrow, and the soldiers hampered each other. Twice he managed to get strokes home; but each one only served to increase the fury of the soldiers.

A heavy blow snapped Lamore's weapon off short at the hilt, and he stood defenceless. One of the soldiers shortened his sword to strike a fatal blow; but the officer struck the weapon up.

"Hold!" he said sternly. "Alive he is worth more than dead. Mayhap it is Monmouth himself. Corporal—a light!"

Flint and steel scraped together, a feeble light flared up, and revealed Lamore's face. He passed his hand, with apparent carelessness, across his eyes, and the light fell upon Monmouth's ring.

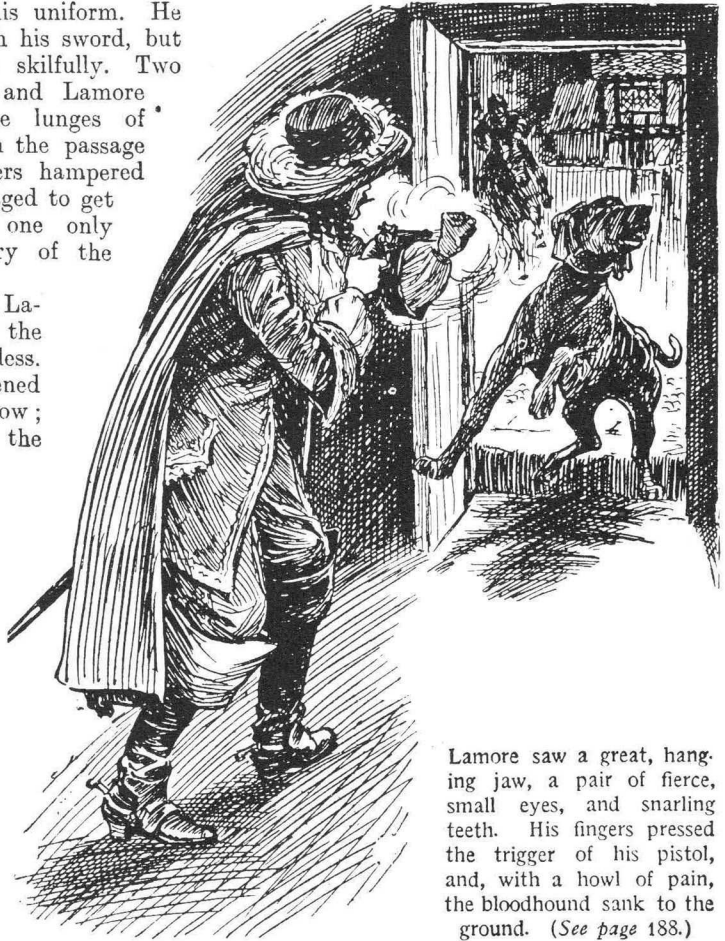
"Monmouth!" the officer shouted gleefully.

"Ay, Colonel Norfell," Lamore answered coolly; "I believe I have had the honour of meeting ye before, have I not? How is the wounded arm?"

"Stap me, ye have little cause to jest!" Norfell answered savagely. "Bind him, two of ye!"

This order was very quickly carried out, and Colonel Norfell beckoned a corporal to him.

"To horse, Saunders!" he ordered. "Ride ye straight back to Taunton. Churchill will be there by then. Tell him that Colonel Norfell hath the rebel Monmouth safe, and awaiteth instructions from him."



Lamore saw a great, hanging jaw, a pair of fierce, small eyes, and snarling teeth. His fingers pressed the trigger of his pistol, and, with a howl of pain, the bloodhound sank to the ground. (See page 188.)

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

As Sir Stephen had reckoned, the coast was reached by dawn, and Monmouth, still unconscious, for the blow which he had sustained was no light one, was taken safely on board. Sir Stephen went with him, but neither Ralph nor Truman; for they had no intention of leaving Lamore to his fate. If pluck and daring could save him, they meant to make him once more a free man.

"Keep all ready to sail at once, father," Ralph said, as he shook the old man's hand. "We should be with ye, if all is well, in two

days. Wait three. If by then we have not joined ye, set sail."

Truman and Ralph travelled back along the road towards the village at a slow canter, for they dared not fatigue further their already tired horses. Besides, the distance was no great one to the village where they expected to find the soldiers and their prisoner.

After two hours' riding, and as dawn was paling the sky, they reached the village. In truth they had no reason to believe that it was here that the soldiers and their prisoner were quartered, yet it seemed probable. The surmise proved correct; for as they reached the end of the street they caught sight of a score of horses, with the army trappings, tethered outside the inn door.

"What now?" Truman asked.

"Nothing," Ralph answered. "We can do naught as yet. We must wait till the night. Stay ye in the fields here out of sight, and watch for what might happen. I shall ride round to the other end, and keep watch there. If naught has happened by nightfall I shall join ye here. Then we must act as it seemeth best."

Truman rode into the field bordering the road, and Ralph, skirting the village, galloped away to his post. He dismounted behind a clump of trees, and there passed the day, watching the road. A few travellers passed, but they were of no importance. It was not until Ralph was tightening his horse's girths, with the intention of riding to join Truman, that anything of interest occurred.

A solitary horseman, wearing the uniform of the dragoons, galloped along the road and entered the village. Ralph waited for no more, but, swinging into the saddle, galloped through the fields to where Truman lay hidden.

"Nothing hath happened," the latter said, stamping about to shake the cramp from his limbs. "And ye?"

"Little enough. But the time has come to act. Mount! We ride to the inn!"

As the two men drew up at the door of the inn they saw that the dragoon horses were still there. Lamore, the supposed Monmouth, had not yet been removed; so there was still the chance of saving him. The landlord

came hurrying out, and shouted to a man to take the horses.

"What would ye have, gentlemen?"

Ralph's sharp eyes had caught sight of uniforms through the window of the front room of the inn.

"A private room," he said quietly, and stepped into the passage, followed by Truman. He passed an open door, and saw a couple of soldiers within, one of whom he recognised as Colonel Norfell. Past this was another door, and Ralph pushed it boldly open and entered.

"This will do, host," he said quietly. "Bring food and wine—the best ye have."

"We are in luck, Truman," he added, as soon as the landlord had left. "How thick is the dividing wall?"

"An inch of oak," Truman answered, who had been carefully sounding the panels. "Ye will hear naught through it."

"Wait," Ralph said, with a smile. "Our first point is won; now we must learn the soldiers' plans."

The landlord brought in food and wine, and departed. Ralph promptly fastened the door, then drew his sword.

"Make ye a clatter with the knives and cups," he ordered, "'twill drown any small noise I may make."

Wondering what Ralph was about to do, Truman obeyed. He was soon enlightened as he saw Ralph, with the point of his sword, set to work to bore a hole in the wall. This was a work of some little time, for the oak was tough, but at last Ralph desisted, leaving a hole but a fraction of an inch broad at the other end, opening into the next room. He placed his ear against it, and listened. Luck was with him, the officers were discussing their plans.

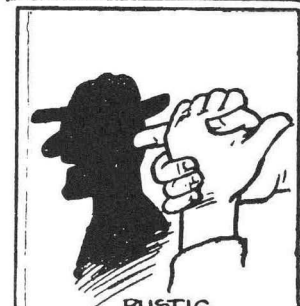
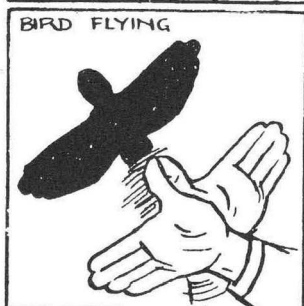
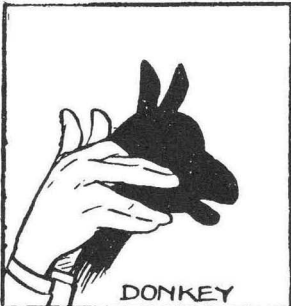
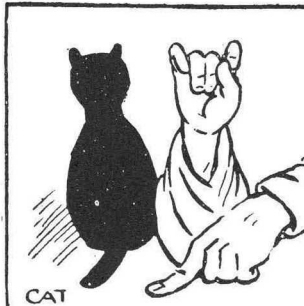
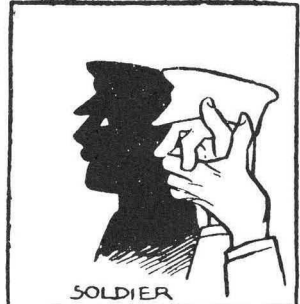
"Ay, I shall be glad enough to part with him," Norfell said. "Faith, we have earned a snug reward, and I am willing to part with so slippery a prisoner. Let our work end, say I, and others take the risk."

"They come to-night?" the other officer queried.

"The corporal hath brought word that two officers from Churchill will be here; an escort, a hundred strong, will follow. We are to deliver Monmouth to these officers."

EASY SHADOWGRAPHS

Any boy or girl can perform these simple silhouettes with the aid of a small screen and a lighted candle.



Ralph had heard enough. He left the wall and seated himself at the table. Hunger presses its claims at all times, and despite the danger surrounding him he made a hearty meal.

When he had finished he sat still and silent for more than an hour. At the end of that time his brow cleared, and he looked at Truman with a smile.

"To-night Lamore shall be free," he said coolly.

"And how?" Truman asked, in amazement.

Ralph told him what he had heard, but even then Truman's surprise did not vanish.

"What can we do?" he queried. "A hundred men places him beyond our reach."

"Nay, but we act when there are but two. The officers ride first; they shall never reach here, but we shall, my friend, and Lamore shall be handed over to us."

"You mean," Truman cried hoarsely, "that we waylay these officers, take their papers, and come in their place?"

"Yes. What think ye of it?"

"The only way," Truman answered excitedly. "It smacks of success."

A little later, having settled their score, Ralph and Truman rode away from the inn. The officers, drinking heavily and dicing to pass away the time, paid no heed to them. Ralph led the way straight out of the village, and pushed along down the road for a matter of three miles. Here he called a halt.

"We must take no chances," he said. "These officers might not give in to an equal number. We must have help."

"From where?"

"Give me thy hat."

Truman obeyed, and Ralph, cutting a thin branch from a tree close at hand, stuck the hat upon it. Then he drove the stick into the ground behind the hedge. In the dark the hat looked like a man peering out on to the road. He did the same with his own headpiece, and the effect was so natural that Truman could not refrain from laughing.

"Back to the hedge," Ralph ordered, "and do not move before I give the order. A slip would be fatal."

In the dark, Ralph and Truman drew their

horses to opposite sides of the road, and sat ready, pistols in hand. An hour passed, and not a single traveller went by, but close upon midnight the sound of hoofs could be heard.

"Two horsemen," Ralph said, in a low voice. "Be ready."

Nearer and nearer drew the beat of the hoofs, and the hearts of the waiting men thumped painfully against their ribs. Ralph strained his eyes through the darkness, for he had no wish to stop the wrong men. He caught the glint of metal, and tightened his reins slightly.

"Now!" he cried, when the horsemen had drawn to within twenty yards.

Ralph and Truman, acting together, threw their horses across the road.

"Halt!" the former cried fiercely. "Make no attempt to resist, or ye are dead men. See, we outnumber ye." He waved his pistol towards the headpieces just showing above the hedges. "One movement towards your arms, and we shoot."

The officers had thrown their horses back on to their haunches, and now sat staring in dumb surprise at the men who had stopped them.

"What meaneth this?" one of them cried fiercely, finding his tongue at last.

"You will know soon enough," Ralph answered. "For the present it doth not concern ye. Ye have but to obey my orders."

"Thy orders?" the officer roared. "Mark ye, we are officers of the king, and ye are liable to death for this outrage."

"And ye are liable to death if ye do not curb that tongue of thine," Ralph answered sharply. "As ye see, we are two to one; resistance is useless. If ye value your lives, obey."

"What shall we do?" the other officer asked, in a slightly quieter tone than that of his companion.

"Remove your uniforms."

"Remove our—— Ye jest, sir?"

"Nay, I am quite serious. Men"—Ralph turned towards the hedge—"shoot if I am disobeyed."

The officers looked at each other, then very reluctantly clambered down from their horses and set to work to unbuckle their harness. When this was done they stopped.



Of a sudden, with a force that nearly brought him to the ground, Ralph reined in his horse, throwing him back upon his haunches. (See page 177.)

"Off with your clothes," Ralph ordered sternly, "and lose no time."

There was a short hesitation; but, unarmed now, the officers could do nothing but obey. The elder made a move to hide a paper behind him, but Ralph saw the action.

"Throw it to me."

The paper fell at Ralph's feet, and he picked it up with the point of his sword. It was the order to hand over Monmouth, signed by Churchill, the second in command of King James's troops.

"Get into the harness," Ralph whispered in a low voice to Truman, "and be quick."

While the officers stood shivering in distinctly scanty attire, Truman donned one of the uniforms and mounted a captured horse.

"Guard while I change," Ralph whispered.

Ten minutes later both Ralph and Truman were fully dressed as dragoon officers and mounted on the army horses.

"When we are gone ye may dress," Ralph said, turning to the shivering men.

At the same moment he struck his own horse, which he had discarded for the officer's, on the flank with the flat of his sword, and it

bounded off down the road, making away from the village. The bridle of the other Ralph slipped over his arm.

"Now!" he cried.

Before the officers could guess what was happening Ralph and Truman had set spurs to their horses and were galloping back to the village, taking the spare horse with them. A volley of oaths followed them.

"Pull thy cloak up over thy face," Ralph said, as he and his companion galloped furiously along. "Ye will wait without the inn while I enter. Stay there unless I cry for help."

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

RALPH and Truman pulled up at the door of the inn, from the windows of which lights glowed, showing that the officers were still carousing. Ralph entered boldly, and clanked into the room in which the two officers sat. They rose unsteadily to their feet as he entered, his cloak drawn well up over the lower half of his face.

"Colonel Norfell?" he queried.

"I am he. What want ye?"

Without a word Ralph handed over the paper which he had taken from the officer. Norfell tore it open, read it hastily, and bowed to Ralph.

"Be seated, sir," he said. "I can offer ye a fair wine for such a village. Will ye honour us by joining us until the escort arrives?"

"The offer is tempting, sir," Ralph answered coolly, "but my orders are explicit. My companion awaits me without. We must take the rebel Monmouth now and ride back to meet the escort."

"'Tis hardly safe," Norfell ventured.

"The order is exact," Ralph persisted. "Would ye, as a loyal and brave officer, have me disobey? I will but ask ye to see the rebel bound safely to the horse I have brought for him. We shall meet the escort within the hour."

"As ye will, sir."

Norfell left the room, and could soon be heard shouting orders. Within a couple of minutes Lamore, perfectly cool and composed, was led into the room. His eyes fell upon Ralph, and he started slightly, but the next moment his face was as indifferent as ever.

"A pretty king, by my faith," Ralph said, with a well-feigned sneer. "See to his binding, colonel; we must not lose so fine a bird."

Lamore was led out between two soldiers, and Ralph was about to follow, when Norfell laid a hand upon his arm.

"Nay, sir," he said, "a cup of sack will serve to keep out the cold."

Ralph took the proffered wine, and raised it to his lips. As he did so a sudden commotion broke out just before the window of the room. He set the cup down sharply, and sprang to the door, none too soon.

The two officers, who had evidently made a run for the village, but half dressed in the garments that had been left for them, were attacking Truman, while half a score of troopers looked on, not knowing what to do. Ralph sprang sharply at the nearest of the two men, and with a blow from his fist felled him to the ground.

"Bind and gag these fellows!" he cried sternly; "they are rebels. Once this night already have they set upon us, mayhap knowing our mission."

Willing enough to join in any row, the troopers threw themselves upon the two men, and they were quickly gagged and bound. Ralph breathed a sigh of relief, and turned to Norfell, who had just hurried out.

"Guard these men well, colonel," he ordered; "they are rebels. Ye have safely secured the rebel Monmouth? Good! Then we must ride."

Lamore's feet had been tied beneath the horse, and now Truman and Ralph mounted, riding on either side of him.

"Farewell!" Ralph cried, as he urged his horse forward. "Take care of the reward, colonel!"

The village was left behind, and Lamore opened his mouth to speak as Ralph slashed through his bonds.

"Not yet," the latter said sharply. "It's ride for our lives now. At any moment the truth may be discovered. We must be aboard the lugger within the hour."

Wheeling round, the three men galloped back through the fields, skirting the village, and not taking to the road until they had covered a clear three miles. Within the hour the coast was reached, and Ralph, drawing a pistol, discharged it into the air. The creak of rowlocks answered this signal, after the lapse of a few minutes, and before long the little band, leaving their horses to take care of themselves, had been pulled safely to the lugger, where they were met by Sir Stephen with open arms.

"All is well with Monmouth?" Ralph asked.

"He hath kept his cabin, Ralph," the old man answered. "He came to shortly after ye left, and asked for ye. I told him what had happened. He bade me leave him in his cabin and not disturb him."

A short, squat man rolled up.

"The wind's i' the right quarter, sirs," he growled.

"Then up with the anchor and clap on all sail, captain," Ralph answered. "Good-bye to England!"

Hoarse orders rang out, the anchor chain rattled through the hawse-hole, sails were shaken out, the wind stiffening them to the firmness of steel, and the lugger, with her

captain at the helm, stole away from the dim, dark shore.

Ralph, Lamore, and Truman were ready enough to turn in, and it was broad daylight before they awoke on the following day. They went up on deck, and saw that on all sides there was nothing but the gently rolling sea, for the wind had held steady, and the lugger had drawn well out into mid-Channel. Monmouth neither appeared on deck nor at the first meal of the day.

"I shall go to him, father," Ralph said, as noon passed and still he had not appeared.

"He asked not to be disturbed, Ralph," the old man protested.

"I know; but ye know not what may be wrong. His wound may have caused him fresh trouble."

Without waiting to argue further, Ralph went below, and strode to the little cabin which had been prepared for Monmouth. He knocked at the door, but received no answer. Three times he knocked, but always with the same result. Fearing that something was amiss, he thrust open the door, which was not locked, and entered the little cabin.

It was empty!

There could be no doubt about it. Ralph looked round sharply, hardly able to believe his eyes, and his glance fell upon a sheet of paper fastened against the bulkhead. He crossed over to it, knowing before he could see to read the writing upon it that it concerned the missing man.

"My good friends"—the letter ran—"I know not who will read this, but I trust that it may be ye, Ralph Truman, and Lamore, for I owe ye more than I can ever repay. I have but just heard of Lamore's sacrifice, and I cannot permit it. May he escape. I am bound to leave the ship secretly, to wander, a hunted fugitive, for I will not bring more evils upon ye. May the day soon come when ye will be free men once more.

"I thank ye, more than I can write in mere feeble words, for your allegiance to my cause, and ask ye to think kindly of him who, had the fates been more propitious, might have been your king, as he has ever wished to be your friend.
MONMOUTH."

With this paper in his hand Ralph rushed

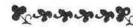
THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY

IN VERSE

By Dick Penfold



No. 7: Percy Bolsover



Whose voice is like the boom of guns?
Whose boots are elephantine ones?
And who descended from the Huns?

Bolsover!

Who punches tiny fags on sight?
Who always holds that Might is Right?
Who never fails to bark and bite?

Bolsover!

Who stalks about as if he meant
To boss the merry firmament?
Who often loiters, "with intent"?

Bolsover!

Who throws his weight about so much
That small fags scurry from his clutch
(Or else they'd have to buy a crutch!)?

Bolsover!

Who, though a mighty man of muscle,
Was once defeated in a tussle
With that fine boxing star, Dick Russell?

Bolsover!

Who (if I don't mistake the signs),
Will carry out his base designs
Upon the writer of these lines?

Bolsover!

up to the deck. Sir Stephen took it from him, and his old eyes dimmed as he learnt the dread tidings. It was passed from him to Lamore and Truman, and all knew the worst.

Ralph glanced at his friends, then back at the trail of foam stretching out behind the lugger as far as the eye could see, forming a path back to the shores of old England. He touched Lamore on the arm, and pointed back along the wake.

"Shall that be our path, Lamore?" he asked, in a tense voice.

"Ye mean——"

"Ay; shall we travel back the way we have come, to make one more effort to save Monmouth?"

"That we will!" Truman, who had caught the words, broke in eagerly. "Live or die, say I, with Monmouth!" The yeoman turned, and was about to hail the captain, when Ralph stopped him.

"Not yet," he said quietly; "there are others who needs must be asked. "Father"—turning to Sir Stephen—"what say ye? Shall we go back?"

"Let youth decide, Ralph," the old man answered quietly. "My sands o' life have neared their end; the dregs can be had for the asking."

"Then we go!" Ralph cried.

"Back to Monmouth!" Truman yelled, waving his sword above his head.

"Captain, ye knave!" Lamore cried, waving his delicate hand to the seaman in charge of the lugger, "back to England! Spit me if I know the order, or I'd give it myself! Bring her round!"

Orders rang out hoarsely, men sprang to the ropes, the great mainsail swung round, and the lugger turned on her heels like a rearing horse.

Back to England!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

IT was noon by the time that the lugger came in sight of England, but Ralph did not hesitate. He ordered the vessel to be run in as close to the shore as possible, and went ashore in company with Lamore, Truman, and his father. The last-named was to return to the lugger, but he could not resist the tempt-

ation to once more place foot upon the land of his birth.

"Mark well what I tell ye," Sir Stephen said, as the little band stood on the beach. "Monmouth will have kept to the coast, and is probably no great distance from here, possibly hiding in the fields or harboured by some friendly peasant or farmer. If you are to succeed in your quest ye will do so within three days. At the end of that time, successful or unsuccessful, ye must join me on the lugger."

"Where?" Ralph asked.

"To-night we will drop ten miles to the westward, and anchor near the land. Should ye have found Monmouth, light a fire on the cliffs. We shall answer with a blue light, and send a boat ashore. May my old eyes see the beacon to-night!"

A hearty grip of the hand all round, and Sir Stephen reluctantly entered the boat and was pulled back to the lugger. Ralph and his two friends, who were armed only with their swords, but had their breast and back plates under their clothes, set off on foot up the beach, scaled the low cliff, and stood with a great expanse of bare turf, broken here and there by cultivated land, before them. This was practically the same spot at which the lugger had picked them up, and from which Monmouth had set out alone.

"Which way hath he gone, think ye?" Ralph queried.

"To the west," Truman answered readily. "The whole countryside there is in favour o' Monmouth, an' many a yeoman would hide him if it cost him his life."

"What think ye, Lamore?" Ralph asked.

"Faith, I side with Truman," the Cavalier answered, "though, spit me, if this isn't like hunting for a needle in a haystack."

"Nay, 'tis not so bad as ye may think," Ralph said, with a smile. "I am known in these parts. Monmouth must have begged food somewhere, and if he hath travelled this way we shall soon be on his track."

Without further argument the three men set out across the fields, keeping about half a mile from the shore. They felt certain that Monmouth would not have remained very near to the spot at which he had landed, and therefore made no inquiries at the first three

homesteads which they passed. The whole country seemed deserted, and there were not even labourers in the fields. At such a time, when any man might be arrested as a rebel, innocent or guilty, farmer and labourer deemed it best to remain within the shelter of their homes.

As day was drawing into dusk Ralph sighted a larger farm than any that they had previously passed, and turned in its direction. This place was about half a mile further inland, and so planted round with trees that had it not been for the smoke from its chimneys the traveller would have passed it by without guessing its existence. Ralph knew the owner of this place, one Owen Winter, an old man who had fought stoutly for the Roundheads, and whom nothing but years had kept from joining the standard of the ill-fated Monmouth.

"There is a chance that Master Winter hath heard o' Monmouth," Ralph remarked, "for Monmouth hath heard of him."

"We'll draw the covert," Lamore said quickly; "an' who knows but we may get the scent."

By the time the trees round the farmhouse were reached night had fallen, but not a light appeared in the windows of the house.

"A right good retreat," Truman remarked, as he loosened his sword in the scabbard. "I like not the want of lights."

"Faith, but I do," Lamore put in quickly; "it smelleth of hidden men, and o' treason to the usurper. Methinks Ralph's instinct hath led us aright."

Passing up a narrow path, bordered thickly on both sides by trees, the trunks of which were so close together that they fell little short of a wall, the three men reached the door of the farmhouse, and Ralph struck the stout, hard door with the hilt of his sword.

There was no answer, nothing save the echo of the knock through the house. Ralph struck again, with a force that made the door, strong though it was, shake.

"He is here," Truman whispered excitedly, "or why this strange reception?"

Three times Ralph beat upon the door, and was about to strike for the fourth time, when the sound of shuffling feet arrested his arm.

Someone was approaching the door, under which a streak of light now gleamed.

"What want ye?" an old but firm voice demanded, the words coming only faintly through the door. "Who are ye that wake peaceful farmers from their beds? Begone!"

"Nay, but I had not expected such a sorry welcome, Master Winter!" Ralph cried.

"Who are ye?" the voice answered.

"Ralph Athelney."

A creaking of bars and bolts followed this statement, and the door opened, revealing the figure of an old man, who held a rushlight in his left hand and a long sword in his right. He thrust the light forward, scanning Ralph's face closely with dim eyes, for he was a very old man.

"Enter," he said, "and mark me well. I have near a score of stout fellows within. At such times as these be I trust no man, so beware. I have but to give the signal an' ye will not leave the place alive."

"Stap me," Lamore said, with a smile; "but for one of thy years, Master Owen Winter, thou art over warlike."

"No man is too old to give a signal," Winter answered sharply.

He led the way down the passage, after he had locked and bolted the door securely, and entered a spacious room. The rushlight's feeble flame only served to heighten the shadows in the corners, make the oak rafters and panelling still blacker, and draw a glint from the barrels of sundry fowling-pieces which adorned the walls.

"Be seated."

The three men threw themselves into chairs, and the old man stood close by the door, his long sword still in his hand. The rushlight he had placed on a small shelf, evidently designed for that purpose.

"Thy business, Master Athelney?" he demanded sternly.

"News of Monmouth," Ralph answered coolly.

Owen Winter started sharply, and stared Ralph in the face.

"What mean ye, Master Athelney?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Simply this. Monmouth is somewhere in this part of the country, and we are his

friends. We have a vessel waiting off the coast to bear him safely abroad."

"And why came ye to me?"

"Because we knew ye to be a loyal gentleman, and so did Monmouth. But waste no time. Hath Monmouth been here?"

"More than that," Master Winter answered, after a long pause, "he is here now."

"Here?"

Ralph leapt to his feet in excitement. "Ay," the old man answered coolly, "and ye shall see him. But beware! If ye are friends, all is well; if not—if ye be traitors—it shall mean death to ye, despite your swords."

He clapped his hands sharply, and a few seconds later a score of men, mostly of the labourer class, but all well armed, filed quietly into the room and ranged themselves round it.

"Watch these strangers, lads," Master Winter commanded; "if they attempt to leave strike and spare not."

The old man hastened out of the room, leaving Ralph and his friends to stare in amazement at the score of stern, determined faces around them.

"Good as a play," Lamore remarked coolly. "The old boy ought—The King!"

Monmouth, his handsome face slightly flushed, stood in the doorway, Master Winter just behind him. He peered through the dim light, and his eyes fell upon the faces of his friends.

"Ralph!" he cried, in a voice shaking with emotion, springing forward and gripping Athelney by the hand. "And Lamore—safe, thank Heaven—and our good friend Truman."

"Safe, every one of us, sire," Ralph answered, "and ready to take ye to safety, too."

"What mean ye?" Monmouth asked, hardly yet certain that his eyes had not deceived him.

"That the ship awaits us—she should be anchored near to here. We have but to give a signal, then all sail for France. We must lose no time. Are ye ready to come now, sire?"

"Ay," Monmouth answered, in a shaking voice, passing a hand across his eyes. "Had mortal man ever such faithful friends before?"

"My men shall go with ye," Master Owen Winter broke in. "There's a party o' cut-throat dragons in the neighbourhood, an' should ye come across them my men will hold 'em back while ye escape."

No time was lost.

Ralph, Monmouth, their two friends, and the score of stout yokels, under the command of Master Winter himself, left the farmhouse and marched rapidly for the shore, which lay about a mile distant.

This was reached in safety, and from the edge of the cliffs Ralph looked down upon the sloping beach. He could just make out the gleam of water a few yards distant.

"Some of ye gather sticks for a beacon," he ordered, turning to the men. "Methinks I catch the gleam of a light from time to time about a mile from the shore. It may be the ship."

The sticks were soon gathered, flint and steel were used by a dozen hands, and a tongue of flame leapt up. Ralph stood at the edge of the cliff, staring anxiously out to sea. A cry of joy broke from him as a blue light shone out across the water, not half a mile distant, revealing dimly the spars of the Revenge.

"Hark!" Lamore said sharply. "Our fire hath brought the enemy upon us."

It was true enough. From not far away came the beat of horses' hoofs. Evidently the cavalry had been passing close at hand, and, catching sight of the beacon, had decided to investigate the matter.

"Put the fire out," Ralph ordered sharply, "and scatter the ashes."

This order was obeyed promptly, and all was dark.

"Lead the way to the shore," Ralph said quietly, turning to Master Winter.

Without the slightest hesitation the old man led the way along the cliff to where a kind of natural steps led down to the shore. Down this the whole party passed in single file, reaching the shore in safety. By that time the creak of rowlocks could be distinctly heard, and later a boat grated sharply on the shore.



A cry of joy broke from Ralph as a blue light shone out across the water, not above half a mile distant, revealing dimly the spars of the *Revenge*. (See page 198.)

"Tis ye, Ralph?" the voice of Sir Stephen asked, out of the darkness.

"Ay, and Monmouth!"

"Quick, then," the old man answered; "come aboard! Methought I heard the jingle of cavalry on the cliffs."

"Ye did, Sir Stephen," Winter answered coolly, "but ye need have no fear. They'll not find the way down, an' if they do ye'll be safe aboard by then and we'll be back at the farm!"

In the dark Monmouth and his friends clambered into the boat, after shaking old Winter warmly by the hand. Half a score of

the yokels ran her out into deep water, her head was pulled round, and she cut away for the *Revenge*. Ralph, sitting in the stern, Monmouth beside him, listened anxiously for sounds of strife, but none had come by the time that the black side of the *Revenge* had been reached. Master Winter had spoken the truth, and by now was well back towards the farm with his men.

And Monmouth was safe.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

No sobner were Monmouth and his friends aboard than the anchor chain creaked,

all hands sprung to make sail, and the *Revenge* bore away from the shore, for the second time making her bid for the liberty of those aboard of her.

The night was cold, and the wind was on the increase. Ralph led the way below, and ten minutes later the whole of the party were busy with a rough, but to them very welcome, meal.

Hardly had this been finished before the captain of the vessel, his face wrinkled up anxiously, looked in at the door.

"There's a ship's lights to windward o' us, sirs," he said in his hoarse voice; "but we ha' the heels o' her, I'm thinkin'."

"What kind of a vessel do you take her to be?" Ralph asked quickly.

"Like as not a king's ship—frigate, from the lights."

This was bad news, and Monmouth and the others hurried up on deck. Sure enough the lights showed not more than a mile away, but even as they gazed at them they vanished.

"She's got the scent o' us, I fear," Ralph said between his teeth.

"Naught to fear from that," the captain growled, "unless a gale springs up. She'd stand to that better'n our craft."

No man thought of sleep now. Monmouth, a long cloak pulled round him, paced the heaving deck, Ralph beside him, not a word passing between them. The others stood by the bulwarks, trying to pierce the dense darkness with their eyes, and waiting for the dawn, which would tell them the best or worst. Every moment the wind increased, and sail was shortened from time to time. Even then the ship lay over before it until her bulwarks were awash, and the men on the deck had to hang on grimly to the ropes.

Daybreak. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the sky changed from dark blue to pearly grey, a light pink showed in streaks here and there; then, with a suddenness that was almost startling, it was day.

A cry of alarm broke from Ralph. Not a mile astern, and coming on under a press of canvas, was a large ship, flying the king's colours. Hardly had Ralph sighted her before a flash of flame sprang from her bows, and a ball passed wide of the *Revenge*.

The captain hurried up for orders, working his way along the bulwarks, over which the spray flew in clouds.

"Orders," he said shortly.

"We keep on!" Ralph answered grimly. "Have we the heels of the frigate now, think ye?"

"No," the seaman answered, with a conviction that there was no gainsaying; "but the wind's droppin'. Give us time an' a lighter wind, an' we'll shake her off!"

"Unless we're sunk first, my friend," Lamore remarked coolly, as the frigate brought her whole broadside to bear.

"Not in this sea," the sailor answered, shading his eyes with his hand. "She's clean off the mark. Let her do that as oft as she will; each time'll give us a lead."

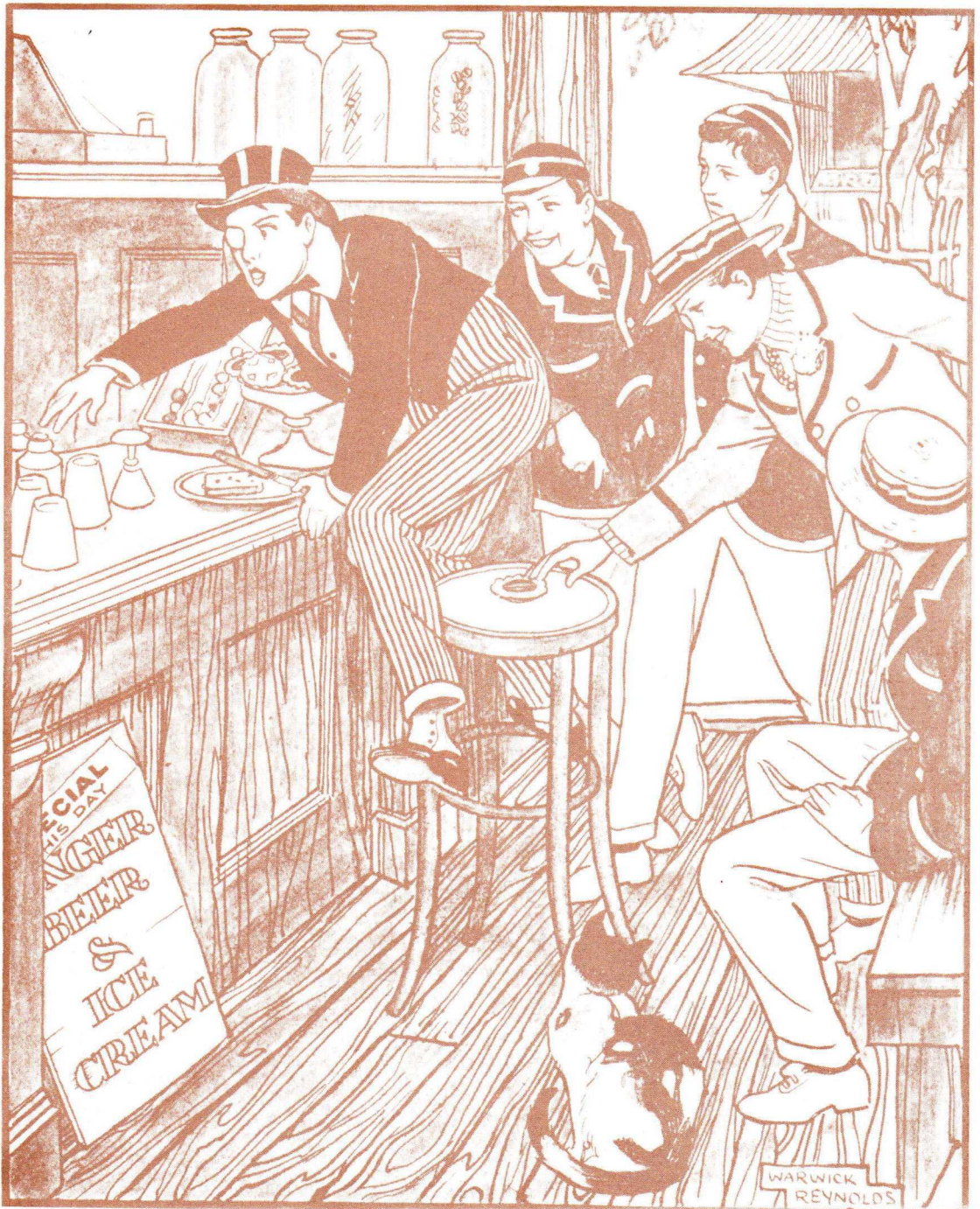
The wind was already dropping, and as the captain of the *Revenge* shouted for more sail, the rigging of the frigate grew black with men. Studding sails bellowed out, and she tore on before the wind. But now even a landsman could see that she was not gaining, and but barely held her distance.

Monmouth, his face flushed with excitement, held to the halliard, watching the king's ship. The sea ran high, causing the vessel's guns at one moment to be aiming at the sea and the next at the air. She had given up firing now, realising, as the captain of the lugger had already seen, that every time she tacked to deliver her broadside she lost ground. She was now endeavouring to outail the smaller craft.

"We do 'em!" Lamore cried exultantly, losing his habitual indifference for a moment. "As our nautical friend there says, we have the heels of her!"

But he spoke too soon. The wind, which had dropped, sprang up again, beating the *Revenge* down dangerously, until sail had once more to be shortened. The frigate came plunging along a trifle faster; but she gained so slowly that the lessening of the distance between the two vessels was imperceptible except to the eye of a sailor.

The captain of the *Revenge*, who held the tiller, from time to time cast quick glances over his shoulder. His mouth was set hard, the lips pressed into a thin line. Once or



THE ROOKWOOD FELLOWS WAITED IN BREATHLESS EXPECTATION FOR THE SWELL OF ST. JIM'S TO SIT DOWN. (See page 134.)



“ Not a mile astern, and coming on under a press of canvas, was a large ship, flying the King’s colours ! ”



The Tuckshop Tragedy.

By **DICK PENFOLD.**
(With apologies to
"Excelsior.")

The shades of night were falling fast
As into Mrs. Mible's passed
A boy with much more flesh than bones
Who cried, in faint and famished tones,
"Ten Doughnuts!"

His brow was sad, and moist his eye;
He drew a deep, despairing sigh;
And as he staggered to a seat
They heard his feeble voice repeat:
"Ten Doughnuts!"

Said Mrs. Mible in despair:
"You must be mad, I do declare!
I've kept this shop for many a year,
But never known a boy to clear
Ten Doughnuts!"

"Rats!" cried the youth. "I'll have some
ham,
Some pickles, and a jar of jam.
Those mutton patties look all right,
And, quick! don't keep me here all night—
Ten Doughnuts!"

"Try not the tarts," his schoolmates said,
"Already you have overfed,
And no more room remains inside."
But loud that clarion voice replied:
"Ten Doughnuts!"

When all his dainties hove in sight,
He danced the Tango with delight;
With waistcoat buttons all undone,
He then demolished, one by one,
Ten Doughnuts!

Alas! his inner man was packed,
The vital organs failed to act,
And with a wild and startled cry
He sank, weighed down in anguish by
Ten Doughnuts!

There, in the tuckshop, on the mat,
Writhing in agony, he sat,
And ere his eyelids closed in death,
He murmured, with his latest breath:
"Ten Doughnuts!"

(William George Bunter, take warning!—Ed.)

twice he glanced aloft, as if about to order more sail; but the heeling of his craft told him that it was impossible.

If only the wind would lighten!

An hour passed, and in that time the king's ship had drawn to within three-quarters of a mile. Her deck was crowded with men, and Ralph and the others could see black forms standing ready at the guns. If matters continued much longer in this way the end would come very soon.

Ralph, from his post from the bulwarks, looked round the Revenge's decks, counting the men. In all there were two dozen seamen. He clawed his way to where the captain hung on to the straining tiller, and lent a hand.

"If she comes up with us, captain," he said sharply, "will the men fight?"

"Ay," the sailor answered, a fierce light in his eyes. "They'll sink or swim with Monmouth!"

"Then give the order. Let every man be armed, and do ye bid them fight till the last drops. There shall be no surrender. I will take the tiller."

The captain clawed his way along the bulwarks to where a group of his men were hanging on, leaving Ralph in charge of the tiller. He was well equal to this task, for he was no mere landsman, who did not know a block from the capstan.

A wild hurrah broke from the crew as their captain reached them; and three of the sailors, taking their chance, made a dash for the hatchway. A little later they reappeared on deck, bearing with them cutlasses and pistols. These were served out with some difficulty; but at last it was done. The frigate carried probably more than two hundred men, but Monmouth, his friends, and the two dozen seamen had no intention of being taken without a struggle.

As soon as the arming of the crew had been accomplished, the captain made his way back to the tiller. He glanced behind him, then up at the sails. A hoarse order broke from him, and eight men leapt into the rigging.

The wind was dropping away again, and more sail could be set. There was a chance of out-sailing the enemy yet.

With a suddenness that took all aboard the *Revenge* by surprise, the wind veered clean round. The vessel shuddered under the shock, and her great sails bellied out with a crash. There was a cry of dismay, wild and piercing, but for the moment none heeded it, for the ship lay over to such a degree that it seemed as if she could never right herself again.

Slowly the angle of her deck lessened, and the danger was passed. Then Ralph learnt the reason for the wild cry of dismay. Monmouth no longer stood by the bulwarks.

Ralph, his heart beating wildly, looked astern, and his worst fears were realised. A dark head showed above the waves, midway between the *Revenge* and the frigate. It was Monmouth, who had been swept overboard.

"Bring her round!" Ralph cried hoarsely. "We must pick him up!" He leapt to the helm, but Lamore, throwing his arms round him, held him back.

"It is useless," he said in a hoarse voice. "Look—they have him now!"

It was the truth. As Ralph looked back at the frigate, he saw with dismay Monmouth hauled aboard. All was over. All the efforts that had been made were useless. Monmouth was a prisoner aboard the king's ship!

Then, as if to make things worse, the wind lightened, and the *Revenge* began to draw away from the frigate. The latter swung round, a hail of shot passed close to the

Revenge, and the chase was over. Over, yes; but how dismally!

With an aching heart, Ralph clawed his way to the hatch and went below, realising that nothing could now save Monmouth, the man for whom he had fought so staunchly, and for whom he would willingly have died.

What more is there to relate, my friends? Little, I assure you. This story has dealt with the deeds of brave men, and we would feign close its pages with but slight reference to the time which elapsed between that period and the day when they were free once more to return to England, upon the throne of which King James II. no longer weakly sat. Let it suffice that, in good time, after those who had fought in Monmouth's cause had met with many an adventure in foreign parts, they returned to England to take up their old life. Sir Stephen, Ralph, and Truman—the last to act as steward of the estate—returned to Athelney Castle; while Lamore, who had succeeded to a large inheritance and a castle not far distant, lived at their home almost as much as his own.

Of Monmouth little need be said. It is kinder, perhaps, to draw a veil over the sufferings through which he passed before meeting his end, in a truly kingly spirit, by the axe on Tower Hill.

Here we must end our story, and close this account of the exploits and plucky adventures of our heroes who fought "In Monmouth's Cause!"

