

A SET OF ROGUES.

BY FRANK BARRETT AUTHOR OF "THE GREAT HESPER," "A RECOLLECTING VENGEANCE," "OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH," ETC., ETC.

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(Continued from last week.)

CHAPTER VI.

On our way back to Greenwich we staid at an inn by the road to refresh ourselves, and there, having a snug parlor to ourselves and being seated about a fine cheese, with each a full measure of ale, Don Sanchez asks us if we are satisfied with our undertaking.

"Aye, that we are," replies Dawson, mightily pleased as usual to be a feast. "We desire nothing better than to have your honor faithfully in all ways are ready to put our hands to any about you may choose to draw up."

"Can you show me the man," asks the don, lifting his eyebrows contemptuously, "who ever kept a treaty he was minded to break? Men are honest enough when naught's to be gained by breaking faith. Are you both agreed to this course?"

"Yes, senor," says I, "and my only compunction now is that I can do so little to forward this business."

"Why, so far as I can see into it," says Dawson, "one of us must be cast for old Mrs. Godwin if Moll is to be her daughter, and you're fitter to play the part than I, for I take it this old gentleman should be of a more delicate, sickly composition than mine."

"We will suppose that Mrs. Godwin is dead," says the don gravely. "Aye, to be sure. That simplifies the thing mightily. But pray, senor, what parts are we to play?"

"The parts you have played today. You go with me to fetch Judith Godwin from Barbary."

"This hangs together and ought to play well. Eh, Kit?"

I asked Don Sanchez how long, in the ordinary course of things, an expedition of this kind would take.

"That depends upon accidents of many kinds," answers he. "We may very well stretch it out the best part of a year."

"A year," says Jack, scratching his ear ruefully, for I believe he had counted upon coming to live like a lord in a few weeks. "And what on earth are we to do in the meanwhile?"

"Educate Moll," answers the don.

"She can read anything, print or script," says Jack proudly, "and write her own name."

"Judith Godwin," says the don reflectively, "lived two years in Italy. She would certainly remember some words of Italian. Consider this—it is not sufficient merely to obtain possession of this estate. It must be held against the jealous opposition of that shrewd steward and of the presumptive heir, Mr. Thomas Godwin, who may come forward."

"You're in the right, senor. Well, there's Kit, who knows the language and can teach her that, I warrant, in no time."

"Judith would probably know something of music," pursues the don.

"Why, Moll can play Kit's fiddle as well as he."

"But, above all," continues the don, as taking no heed of this tribute to Moll's abilities, "Judith Godwin must be able to read and write the Moorish character and speak the tongue readily, answer aptly as to their ways and habits and to do these things beyond suspect. Moll must live with these people for some months."

"God have mercy on us!" cries Jack. "Your honor is not for taking us to Barbary?"

"No," answers the don dryly, passing his long fingers with some significance over the many seams in his long face, "but we must go where the Moors are to be found, on the other side of the straits."

"Well," says Dawson, "all's as one whither we go in safety if we're to be out of our fortune for a year. There's nothing more for our Moll to learn, I suppose, senor."

"It will not be amiss to teach her the manners of a lady," replies the don, rising and knitting his brows together unpleasantly, "and especially to keep her feet under her chair at table."

With this he rings the bell for our reckoning, and so ends our discussion, neither Dawson nor I having a word to say in answer to this last hit, which showed us pretty plainly that in reaching round with her long leg for our shins Moll had caught the don's long shanks a kick that night she was seized with a cough.

So to home again and a long jog back to Greenwich, where Dawson and I would fain have rested the night (being unused to the saddle and very raw with our journey), but the don would not for prudence, and therefore, after changing our clothes, we make a shift to mount once more, and thence another long horrid jolt to Edmonton very painfully.

Coming to the Bell (more dead than alive) about 8, and pitch dark, we were greatly surprised that we could make no one hear to take our horses, and, further, having turned the brutes into the stable ourselves, to find never a soul in the common room or parlor, so that the place seemed quite forsaken. But hearing a loud guffaw of laughter from below we go down stairs to the kitchen, which we could scarce enter for the crowd in the doorway. And here all darkness, save for a sheet hung at the farther end, and lit from behind, on which a kind of phantasmagory play of "Jack and the Giant" was being acted by shadow characters cut out of paper, the performer being hid by a board that served as a stage for the puppets.

And who should this performer be but our Moll, as we knew by her voice, and most admirably she did it, setting all in a roar one minute with some merry joke, and enchanting 'em the next with a pretty song for the maid in distress.

We learned afterward that Moll, who could never rest still two minutes together, but must ever be doing something new, had cut out her images and



"What," cries Jack, "You have flished a couple of spoons?"

devised the show to entertain the servants in the kitchen, and that the guests above, hearing their merriment, had come down in time to get the bag end, which pleased them so vastly that they would have her play it all over again.

"This may undo us," says Don Sanchez, in a low voice of displeasure, drawing us away. "Here are a dozen visitors who will presently be examining Moll as a marvel. Who can say but that one of them may know her again hereafter to our confusion? We must be seen together no more than is necessary until we are out of this country. I shall leave here in the morning, and you will meet me next at the Turk, in Gracious street, tomorrow afternoon."

There with he goes up to his room, leaving us to shift for ourselves, and we into the parlor to warm our feet at the fire till we may be served with some victuals, both very silent and surly, being still sore, and as tired as any dog with our day's jolting.

While we are in this mood, Moll, having finished her play, comes to us in amazing high spirits, and, all aglow with pleasure, shows us a handful of silver given her by the gentry; then, pulling up a chair betwixt us, she asks us a dozen questions all of a string as to where we have been, what we have done, etc., since we left her. Getting no answer, she presently stops, looks first at one, then at the other, and, bursting into a fit of laughter, cries, "Why, what ails you both to be so grumpy?"

"In the first place, Moll," says Jack, "I'll have you to know that I am your father, and will not be spoken to save with becoming respect."

"Why, I did but ask you where you have been."

"Children of your age should not ask questions, but do as they're bid, and there's an end of it."

"La, I'm not to ask any questions. Is there anything else I am not to do?"

"Yes. I'll not have you playing of Galimanfray to cook wenches and such stuff. I'll have you behave with more decency. Take your feet off the hearth and put 'em under your chair. Let me have no more of these galanty shows."

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Why, 'twill be said I cannot give you a basin of porridge, that you must go a-begging of sixpences like this!"

"Oh, if you begrudge me a little pocket money," cries she, springing up, with the tears in her eyes, "I'll have none of it."

And with that she empties her pocket on the chair, and out roll her sixpences, together with a couple of silver spoons.

"What," cries Jack, after glancing round to see we were alone. "You have flished a couple of spoons, Moll?"

"And why not?" asks she, her little nose turning quite white with passion. "If I am to ask no questions, how shall I know but we may have never a spoon tomorrow for your precious basin of porridge?"

CHAPTER VII.

Skipping over many unimportant particulars of our leaving Edmonton, of our finding Don Sanchez at the Turk, in Gracious street, of our going thence (the next day) to Gravesend, of our preparation there for voyage, I come now to our embarking, the 10th March, in the Bell, for Bordeaux, in France. Nor shall I dwell long on that journey, neither, which was exceedingly long and painful, by reason of our nearing the equinoctials, which dashed us from our course to that degree that it was the 26th before we reached our port and cast anchor in still water. And all those days we were prostrated with sickness, and especially Jack Dawson, because of his full habit, so that he declared he would rather ride a horseback to the end of the earth than go another mile on sea.

We staid in Bordeaux, which is a noble town, but dirty, four days to refresh ourselves, and here the don lodged us in a fine inn and fed us on the best, and also he made us buy new clothes and linen (which we sadly needed after the pickle we had lain in a fortnight) and cast away our old, but no more than was necessary, saying 'twould be better to furnish ourselves with fresh linen as we needed it than carry baggage, etc. "And let all you buy be good goods," says he, "for in this country a man is valued at what he seems, and the innkeepers do go in such fear of their seigniors that they will charge him less for entertainment than if he were a mean fellow who could ill afford to pay."

So not to displease him we dressed ourselves in the French fashion, more richly than ever we had been clad in our lives, and especially Moll did profit by this occasion to furnish herself like any duchess, so that Dawson and I drew lots to decide which of us should present the bill to Don Sanchez, thinking he would certainly take exception to our extravagance, but he did not so much as raise his eyebrows at the total, but paid it without ever a glance at the items. Nay, when Moll presents herself in her new equipment, he makes her a low reverence and pays her a most handsome compliment, but in his serious humor and without a smile. He himself wore a new suit all of black, not so fine as ours, but very noble and becoming, by reason of his easy, graceful manner and his majestic, high carriage.

On the last day of March we set forth for Toulouse. At our starting Don Sanchez bade Moll ride by his side, and so we were, not being bid, fell behind, and, feeling awkward in our new clothes, we might very well have been taken for their servants or a pair of ill bred friends at the best, for our Moll carried herself not a whit less magnificent than the don, to the admiration of all who looked at her.

To see these grand airs of hers charmed Jack Dawson.

"You see, Kit," whispers he, "what an apt scholar the minx is, and what an obedient, dutiful, good girl. One word from me is as good as six months' schooling, for all this comes of that lecture I gave her the last night we were at Edmonton."

I would not deny him the satisfaction of this belief, but I felt pretty sure that had she been riding betwixt us in her old gown, instead of beside the don as his daughter, all her father's preaching would not have staid her from behaving herself like an orange wench.

We journey by easy stages ten days through Toulouse, on the road to Perpignan, and being favored with remarkably fine weather, a blue sky and a bright sun above us, and at every turn something strange or beautiful to admire, no pleasure jaunt in the world could have been more delightful. At every inn (which here they call hotels) we found good beds, good food, excellent wine and were treated like princes, so that Dawson and I would gladly have given up our promise of a fortune to have lived in this manner to the end of our days. But Don Sanchez professed to hold all on this side of the Pyrenees mountains in great contempt, saying these hotels were as nothing to the Spanish posadas, that the people here would rob you if they dared, whereas, on t'other side, not a Spaniard would take so much as the hair of your horse's tail, though he were at the last extremity; that the food was not fit for aught but a Frenchman and so forth. And our Moll, catching this humor, did also turn up her nose at everything she was offered and would send away a bottle of wine from the table because 'twas not ripe enough, though but a few weeks before she had been drinking penny ale with a relish, and that as sour as verjuice. And indeed she did carry it mighty high and artificial wherever respect and humility were to be commanded.

But it was pretty to see how she would unbend and become her natural self where her heart was touched by some tender sentiment, how she would empty her pockets to give to any one with a piteous tale, how she would get from her horse to pluck wild flowers by the roadside, and how, one day, overtaking a poor woman carrying a child painfully on her back, she must have the little one up on her lap and carry it till we reached the hamlet where the woman lived, etc. On the tenth day we staid at St. Denys, and, going thence

the next morning, had traveled but a couple of hours when we were caught in a violent storm of hailstones, as big as peas, that was swept with incredible force by a wind rushing through a deep ravine in the mountains, so that 'twas as much as we could make headway through it and gain a village which lay but a little distance from us. And here we were forced to stay all day by another storm of rain, that followed the hail and continued till nightfall. Many others besides ourselves were compelled to seek refuge at our inn, and among them a company of Spanish muleteers, for it seems we were come to a pass leading through the mountains into Spain. These were the first Spaniards we had yet seen (save the don), and for all we had heard to their credit, we could not admire them greatly, being a low browed, coarse featured, ragged crew, and more picturesque than cleanly, besides stinking intolerably of garlic. By nightfall there was more company than the inn could accommodate; nevertheless, in respect to our quality, we were given the best room in the house to ourselves.

About 8 o'clock, as we were about to sit down to supper, the innkeeper comes in to tell us that a Spanish grandee is below, who has been traveling for hours in the storm, and then she asks very humbly if our excellencies will permit her to lay him a bed in our room when we have done with it, as she can bestow him nowhere else (the muleteers filling her house to the very cockloft) and has not the heart to send him on to St. Denys in this pitiless driving rain. To this Don Sanchez replies that a Spanish gentleman is welcome to all we can offer him, and therewith sends down a mighty civil message, begging his company at our table.

Moll has just time to whip on a piece of finery, and we to put on our best manners, when the landlady returns, followed by a stout, robust Spaniard, in an old coat several times too small for him, whom she introduced as Don Lopez de Calvados.

Don Lopez makes us a reverence, and then, with his shoulders up to his ears and like gestures, makes us a harangue at some length, but this, being Spanish, is as heathen Greek to us. However, Don Sanchez explains that our visitor is excusing his appearance as being forced to change his wet clothes for what the innkeeper can lend him, and so we, grinning to express our amiability, all sit down to table and set to—Moll with her most flinching, delicate airs and graces, and Dawson and I silent as frogs, with understanding nothing of the don's conversation. This, we learn from Don Sanchez after supper, has turned chiefly on the best means of crossing into Spain, from which it appears there are two passes through the mountains, both leading to the same town, but one more circuitous than the other.

Don Lopez has come by the latter because the former is used by the muleteers, who are not always the most pleasant companions one can have in a dangerous road, and for this reason he recommends us to take his way, especially as we have a young lady with us, which will be the more practicable, as the same guides who conducted him will be only too glad to serve us on their return the next morning. To this proposition we very readily agree, and supper being ended Don Sanchez sends for the guides, two hardy mountaineers, who very readily agree to take us this way the next morning if the weather permits. And so we all, wishing Don Lopez a good night, go to our several chambers.

I was awake in the middle of the night, as it seemed to me, by a great commotion below of Spanish shouting and roaring, with much jingling of bells, and looking out of the window I perceived lanterns hanging here and there in the courtyard and the muleteers packing their goods to depart, with a fine clear sky full of stars overhead. And scarce had I turned into my warm bed again, thinking God I was no muleteer, when in comes the don with a candle to say that the guide will have us moving at once if we would reach Ravellos (our Spanish town) before night. So I to Dawson's chamber, and we to Moll's, and in a little while we were all shivering down in the great kitchen, where is never a muleteer left, but only a great stretch of garlic, to eat a mess of soup very hot and comforting. And after that out into the dark (there being as yet but a faint flush of green and primrose color toward the east), where four fresh mules (which Don Sanchez overnight had bargained to exchange against our horses as being the only kind of cattle fit for this service) are waiting for us, with two other mules belonging to our guides, all very curiously trapped out with a network of wool and little jingling bells.

Then when Don Sanchez had solemnly debated whether we should not awake Don Lopez to say farewell, and we had persuaded him that it would be kinder to let him sleep on, we mounted into our high, fantastic saddles, and set out toward the mountains, our guides leading, and we following as close upon their heels as our mules could get, but by no guidance of ours, though we held the reins, for these creatures are very sagacious and so pertinacious and opinionated that I believe though you pulled their heads off they would yet go their own way.

Our road at first lay across a flat plain, very wild and scrubby, as I imagine, by the frequent deviations of our beast, and then through a forest of coarse oaks, which keep their leaves all the year through, and here, by reason of the great shade, we went, not knowing whither, as if blindfold, only we were conscious of being on rough, rising ground by the jolting of our mules and the clatter of their hoofs upon stones; but after a wearisome, long spell of this business, the trees growing more scattered and a thin gray light creeping through, we could make out that we were all together, which was some comfort. From these oaks we passed into a wood of chestnuts, and still going up and up, but by such devices, unseen ways that I think no man, stranger to

these parts, could pick it out for himself in broad daylight, we came thence into a great stretch of pine trees, with great rocks scattered among them, as if some mountain had been blown up and fallen in a huge shower of fragments.

And so, still forever toiling and scrambling upward, we found ourselves about 7 o'clock, as I should judge by the light beyond the trees and upon the side of the mountain, with the whole



In comes the don to say that the guide will have us moving at once.

campaign laid out like a carpet under us on one side, prodigious slopes of rock on either hand, with only a shrub or a twisted fir here and there, and on the forest side a horrid stark ravine with a cascade of water thundering down in its midst, and a peak rising beyond, covered with snow, which glittered in the sunlight like a monstrous heap of white salt.

After resting at this point half an hour to breathe our mules, the guides got into their saddles, and we did likewise, and so on again along the side of the ravine, only not of a cluster as heretofore, but one behind the other in a long line, the mules falling into this order of themselves as if they had traveled the path a hundred times, but there was no means of going otherwise, the path being atrociously narrow and steep, and only fit for wild goats, there being no land rail, coping or anything in the world to stay one from being hurled down 1,000 feet, and the mountain sides so inclined that 'twas a miracle the mules could find foothold and keep their balance. From the bottom of the ravine came a constant roar of falling water, though we could spy it only now and then leaping down from one chasm to another, and more than once our guides would cry to us to stop, and that where our mules had to keep shifting their feet to get a hold, while some huge boulder, loosened by the night's rain, flew down across our path in terrified bounds from the heights above, making the very mountain tremble with the shock.

Not a word spoke we; nay, we had scarce courage at times to draw breath for two hours and more of this fearful passage, with no encouragement from our guides save that one of them did coolly take out a knife and peel an onion as though he had been on a level, broad road, and then, reaching a flat space, we came to a stand again before an ascent that promised to be worse than that we had done. Here we got down, Moll clinging to our hands and looking around her with huge, frightened eyes.

"Shall we soon be there?" she asked. And, the don putting this question in Spanish to the guides, they pointed upward to a gap filled with snow, and answered that was the highest point. This was some consolation, though we could not regard the rugged way that lay betwixt us and that without quaking. Indeed, I thought that even Don Sanchez, despite the calm, unmoved countenance he ever kept, did look about him with a certain kind of uneasiness. However, taking example from our guides, we unloosed our saddles, and laid out our store of victuals with a hogskin of wine which rekindled our spirits prodigiously.

While we were at this repast our guides, starting as if they had caught a sound (though we heard none save the horrid bursting of water), looked down, and one of them, clapping two dirty fingers in his mouth, made a shrill whistle. Then we, looking down, presently spied two mules far below on the path we had come, but at such a distance that we could scarce make out whether they were mounted or not.

"Who are they?" asks Don Sanchez sternly, as I managed to understand.

"Friends," replies one of the fellows, with a grin that seemed to lay his face in two halves.

(To be Continued.)

Pay of Russian Ambassadors.

Russian ambassadors are paid about twice as much as ours. The ambassadors to Berlin, Vienna, Constantinople, London and Paris receive 50,000 rubles, or \$37,500; the ambassador to Rome, 40,000 rubles, those at Washington, Tokio, Madrid and Pekin 30,000, at Tehran 25,000, at Athens, Brussels, The Hague, Copenhagen, Mexico, Munich and Stockholm 20,000. The ministers at Bucharest, Belgrade, Rio de Janeiro, Lisbon and Stuttgart get 18,000 rubles, the envoy to the vatican 12,000, those to Dresden and Cettinje 10,000, and to Weimar and Darmstadt 8,000.

Hit by a Partridge.

H. L. James of Rockville, Conn., had an experience recently that he will not soon forget. He was driving to Mansfield, when a partridge that had been shot by a hunter flew into his covered carriage, striking him full in the face. It stunned him for the moment and his face was slightly cut. The bird was dead when found by Mr. James after recovering from the shock.

Tramps Take a Bath.

Tramps are not usually credited with habits of personal cleanliness, especially in cold weather, but the Danbury, Conn., News records the fact that one day last week three of them were seen taking a swim in the stream near the fair grounds in Danbury.

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