SIMON DALE

BY ANTHONY HOPE

COPYRIGHT, 1897 BY A.H.HAWKINS.

SYNOPSIS.

Simon Dale, born of gentle blood in an English country district shortly after the execution of Charles I., is looked upon as destined to greatness because a wise woman has prophesied that he shall "love what the king loves, know what the king hides, and drink of the king's cup." Falling in love with Barbara, daughter of the parish magistrate, Lord Quinton, his young affections are diverted by the appearance of a mysterious London beauty named Cydaria, who secretly sojourns at Hatchstead. Cydaria returns to London, whence there comes to Simon a commission in the King's Guards. He goes to London, discovers that Cydaria is really Nell Gwynn, fights a duel with Lord Carford in support of her fair fame, and decides to resign his commission because she procured it. Simon meets Charles II., who appears vexed at this episode, and once more encounters Barbara Quinton. Barbara is jealous of Cydaria, whose identity she does not know. Simon becomes a favorite of the young duke of Monmouth and is attached to his suite. A message from Mistress Gwynn arouses his old love for her. He has an interview with her, which is interrupted by the unexpected appearance of the king. He discovers the true state of affairs and formally renounces his love to Cydaria. He goes to Dover with the young duke, meets a mysterious messenger from France, with whom he has an altercation, which reveals the fact that there is an underlying motive for the Dover gathering.

Copyright, 1897, by A. H. Hawkins.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GENTLEMAN FROM CALAIS.

Good fortune and bad had combined to make me somewhat more of a figure in the eyes of the court than was warranted by my abilities or my station. The friend of Mistress Gwynn and the favorite of the duke of Monmouth (for this latter title his grace's signal kindness soon extorted from the amused and the envious) was a man whom great folk recognized, and to whom small folk paid civility. Lord Carford had become again all smiles and courtesy. Darrell, who had arrived in the secretary's train, compensated in cordiality for what he lacked in confidence; my Lord Arlington himself presented me in most flattering terms to the French king's envoy, M. Colbert de Croissy, who, in his turn, greeted me with a warmth and regarded me with a curiosity that produced equal gratification and bewilderment in my mind. Finally the duke of Monmouth insisted on having me with him in the castle, while the greater part of the gentlemen attached to the royal and noble persons were sent to lodge in the town for want of accommodation within the walls. My private distress, from which I recovered but slowly, or, to speak more properly, suppressed with difficulty, served to prevent me from becoming puffed up with the conceit which this success might well have inspired.

The first part of Betty Nasroth's prophecy now stood fulfilled, aye, as I trusted, utterly finished and accomplished; the rest carried. I had guessed that there was a secret, what it was remained unknown to me, and, as I soon suspected, to people more important. The interval before the arrival of the duchess of Orleans was occupied in many councils and conferences; at most of them the duke of Monmouth was present and he told me no more than all the court conjectured when he said that Mme. d'Orleans came with a new project for a French alliance and a fresh war with the Dutch. But there were conferences at which he was not present, nor the duke of Buckingham, but only the king, his brother (so soon as his royal highness joined us from London), the French envoy and Clifford and Arlington. Of what passed at these my master knew nothing, though he feigned knowledge; he would be restless when I, having used my eyes, told him that the king had been with M. Colbert de Croissy for two hours, and that the duke of York had walked on the wall above an hour in earnest conversation with the treasurer. He felt himself

"TRULY, I'M DRUNK, BUT IN THE LEGS ONLY, GOOD SIMON."

ignored, and poured out his indignation unreservedly to Carford. Carford would frown and throw eyes toward me, as though to ask if I were to hear these things, but the duke refused his suggestion. Nay, once he said, in jest:

"What I say is as safe with him as with you, my lord, or safer."

I wondered to see Carford indignant.

"Why do you say safer, sir?" he asked haughtily, while the color on his cheeks was heightened. "Is any man's honor more to be trusted than mine?"

"Ah, man, I meant nothing against your honor, but Simon here has a discretion that heaven does not give to every one."

Now, when I see a man so sensitive to suspicion as to find it in every careless word, I am set to thinking whether he may not have some cause to fear suspicion. Honesty expects no accusation. Carford's readiness to repel a charge not brought caught my notice and made me ponder more on certain other conferences to which also his grace, my patron, was a stranger. More than once I had found Arlington and Carford together, with M. Colbert in their company, and on the last occasion of such an encounter Carford had requested me not to mention his whereabouts to the duke, advancing the trivial protest that he should have been engaged in his grace's business. His grace was not our schoolmaster. But I was deceived, most amiably deceived, and held my tongue as he prayed. Yet I watched him close, and soon, had a man told me that the duke of York thought it well to maintain a friend of his own in his nephew's confidence, I would have hazarded that friend's name without fear of mistake.

So far the affair was little to me, but when Mistress Barbara came from London the day before madame was to arrive, hardly an hour passed before I perceived that she also, although she knew it not, had her part to play. I cannot tell what reward they offered Carford for successful service; if a man who sells himself at a high price be in any way less a villain than he who takes a penny, I trust that the price was high, for in pursuance of the effort to obtain Monmouth's confidence and an ascendancy over him, Carford made use of the lady whom he had courted, and as I believed, still courted for his own wife. He threw her in Monmouth's way by tricks too subtle for her to detect, but plain to an attentive observer. I knew from her father that lately he had again begged her hand, and that she had listened with more show of favor. Yet he was the duke's very humble servant in all the plans which that headstrong young man now laid against the lady's peace. Is there need to state the scheme more plainly? In those days a man might rise high and learn great secrets, if he knew when to shut his eyes and how to knock loud before he entered the room.

I should have warned her, it is true but the mischief lay in the fact that by no means could I induce her to exchange a word with me. She was harder by far to me than she had shown herself in London. Perhaps she had heard how I had gone to —; but whether for good reason or bad, my crime now seemed without pardon. Stay; perhaps my condition was below her notice. Or sin and condition so worked together that she would have nothing of me, and I could do nothing but look on with outward calm and hidden sourness while the duke piled her with flatteries that soon grew to passionate avowals, and Carford paid deferential suit when his superior was not in the way. She triumphed in her success as girls will, blind to its perils as girls are; and Monmouth made no secret of his hopes of success, as he sat between Carford's stolid face and my downcast eyes.

"She's the loveliest creature in the world," he would cry. "Come, drink a toast to her!" And I drank silently, while Carford led him on to unrestrained boasts and artfully fanned his passion.

At last—it was the evening of the day before madame was to come—I met her where she could not avoid me, by the constable's tower and alone. I took my courage in my hands and faced her, warning her of her peril in what delicate words I could find. Alas, I made nothing of it. A scornful jest at me and my righteousness, of which, said she, all London had been talking a little while back, was the first shot from her battery. The mention of the duke's name brought a blush and mischievous smile as she answered:

"Shouldn't I make a fine duchess, Mr. Dale?"

"Aye, if he made you one," said I, with gloomy bluntness.

"You insult me, sir," she cried, and the flush on her face deepened.

"Then I do in a few words what his grace does in many," I retorted.

I went about it like a dolt, I do not doubt. For she flew out on me, demanding in what esteem I held her, and in what her birth fell short of Anne Hyde's—"who is now duchess of York and in whose service I have the honor to be."

"Is that your pattern?" I asked. "Will the king interpose for you as he did for the daughter of Lord Clarendon?"

She tossed her head, answering:

"Perhaps so much interference will not be needed."

"And does my Lord Carford share these plans of yours?" I asked, with a sneer.

The question touched her. She flushed again, but gave way not an inch.

"Lord Carford has done me much honor, as you know," said she, "but he wouldn't stand in my way here."

"Indeed, he doesn't," I cried. "Nor in his grace's."

"Have you done, sir?" says she, most scornfully.

"I have done, madame," said I, and on she swept.

"Yet you shall come to no harm," I added to myself, as I watched her proud, free steps carry her away. She also, it seemed, had her dream. I hoped that no more than hurt pride and a heart for the moment sore would come of it. Yet if the flatteries of princes pleased, she was to be better pleased soon and the duke of Monmouth seemed scarcely higher to her than Simon Dale.

Then came madame in the morning from Dunkirk, escorted by the vice admiral, and met above a mile from the coast by the king in his barge, the duke of York, Prince Rupert and my duke, on whom I attended, accompanying his majesty. Madame seemed scarcely as beautiful as I had heard, although of a very high air and most admirable carriage and address, and my eyes, prone, I must confess to seek the fairest face, wandered from hers to a lady who stood near, gifted with a delicate and alluring, yet childish beauty, who gazed on the gay scene with innocent interest and a fresh enjoyment. Madame, having embraced her kinsmen, presented the lady to his majesty by the name of Mlle. Louise Renee de Perrincourt de Querouaille (the name was much shortened by our common folk in later days), and the king kissed her hand, saying that he was rejoiced to see her—as, indeed, he seemed to be, if a man might judge by the time that he spent in looking at her, and the carelessness with which he greeted the others in attendance on madame.

"And these are all who come with you, sister?" he asked.

She answered him clearly, almost loudly:

"Saving a gentleman who is to join me from Calais tomorrow, with messages from the king."

I heard no more, being forced to move away and leave the royal group alone. I had closely examined all who came. For in the presence of madame I read a je viens, in our king's tu viens; but I saw none whose coming would make the tidings il vient worthy of a special messenger to London. But there was a gentleman to arrive from Calais. I had enough curiosity to ask M. de Comte d'Albon, who (with his wife), accompanied madame and stood by me on deck as we returned to land, who this gentleman might be.

"He is called M. de Perrincourt," the count replied, "and is related remotely to the lady whom you saw with madame."

I was disappointed, or rather checked. Was M. de Perrincourt so important that they wrote il vient about him and sent the tidings to London?

After some time, when we were already coming near to shore, I observed madame leave the king and go walking to and fro on the deck in company with Monmouth. He was very merry, and she was very gracious. I amused myself with watching so handsome and well-matched a pair. I did not wonder that my duke was in a mighty good temper, for, even had she been no princess, her company was such as would please a man's pride and content his fancy. So I leaned against the mast, thinking it a pity that they troubled their pretty heads with Dutch wars and the like tiresome matters and were not content to ornament the world, leaving its rule to others. But presently I saw the duke point toward me and madame's glance followed his finger; he talked to her again and both laughed. Then, just as we came by the landing stage, she laid her hand on his arm, as though in command. He laughed again, shrugging his shoulders, then raised his hand and beckoned to me. Now I, while watching, had been most diligent in seeming not to watch, and it needed a second and unmistakable signal from his grace before I hastened up hat in hand. Madame was laughing, and, as I came I heard her say, "Yes, but I will speak to him." The duke, with another shrug, bade me come near, and in due form presented me. She gave me her hand to kiss, saying with a smile that showed her white teeth:

"Sir, I asked to be shown the most honest man in Dover, and my cousin Monmouth has brought you to me."

I perceived that Monmouth, seeking how to entertain her, had not scrupled to press me into his service. This I could not resent, and since I saw that she was not too dull to be answered in the spirit of her address, I made her a low bow and said:

"His grace, madame, conceived you to mean in Dover castle. The townsmen, I believe, are very honest."

"And you, though the most honest in the castle, are not very honest?"

"I take what I find, madame," I answered.

"So M. Colbert tells me," she said, with a swift glance at me. "Yet it's not always worth taking."

"I keep it, in case it should become so," I answered, for I guessed that Colbert had told her of my encounter with M. de Fontelloe; if that were so she might have a curiosity to see me without the added inducement of Monmouth's malicious stories.

"Not if it be a secret? No man keeps that," she cried.

"He may, if he be not in love, madame!"

"But are you that monster, Mr. Dale?" said she. "Shame on the ladies of my native land! Yet I am glad! For, if you're not in love, you'll be more ready to serve me, perhaps."

"Mr. Dale, madame, is not incapable of falling in love," said Monmouth, with a bow. "Don't try him too much."

"He shall fall in love, then, with Louise," she cried.

Monmouth made a grimace and the duchess fell suddenly to laughing, as she glanced over her shoulder toward the king, who was busily engaged in conversation with Mlle. de Querouaille.

"Indeed, no!" I exclaimed with a fervor that I had not intended. No more of that part of Betty Nasroth's prophecy for me, and the king's attentions were already particular. "But if I can serve your royal highness. I am, body and soul, at your service."

"Body and soul!" said she. "Ah, you mean saving—what is it? Haven't you reservations?"

"His grace has spared me nothing," said I with a reproachful glance at Monmouth.

"The more told of you the better you're liked, Simon," said he kindly. "See, madame, we're at the landing, and there's a crowd of loyal folk to greet you."

"I know the loyalty of the English well," said she in a low voice and with a curling lip. "They have their reservations like Mr. Dale. Ah, you're speaking, Mr. Dale!"

"To myself, madame," I answered, bowing profoundly. She laughed, shaking her head at me, and passed on. I was glad she did not press me, for what I had said was "Thank God," and I might likely enough have told a lie if she had put me to the question.

That night the king entertained his sister at a great banquet in the hall of the castle, where there were much drinking of toasts and much talk of the love that the king of France had for the king of England, and our king for the other king, and we for the French (whereas we hated them) and they for us (although they wasted no kindness on us); but at least every man got as much wine as he wanted, and many of them more than they had fair occasion for, and among these last I must count the duke of Monmouth. For after the rest had risen from the table he sat there still, calling Carford

"BY THE KING'S ORDERS, NO MAN IS TO PASS THIS WAY."

to join him, and even bidding me sit down by his side. Carford seemed in no haste to get him away, although very anxious to relieve me of my post behind his chair, but at last, by dint of upbraiding them both, I prevailed on Carford to offer his arm and the duke to accept it, while I supported him on the other side.

Thus we set out for his grace's quarters, making a spectacle sad enough for a moralist, but too ordinary at court for any remark to be excited by it. Still Carford insisted that he could take the duke alone. I would not budge. My lord grew offensive, hinting of busybodies who came between the duke and his friends. Pushed hard, I asked the duke himself if I should leave him. He bade me stay, swearing that I was an honest fellow and no Papist, as were some he knew. I saw Carford start. His grace saw nothing save the entrance of his chamber, and that not over plainly. But we got him in and into a seat, and the door shut. Then he called for more wine, and Carford at once brought it to him and pledged him once again, Monmouth drinking deep.

"He has had more than he can carry already," I whispered. Carford turned straight to the duke, crying, "Mr. Dale here says that your grace is drunk." He made nothing by the move, for the duke answered, good-humoredly:

"Truly I am drunk, but in the legs only, my good Simon. My head is clear—clear as daylight, or the—" He looked around cunningly and caught each of us by the arm. "We're good Protestants here?" he asked, with a would-be shrewd, wine-muddled glance.

"Sound and true, your grace," said Carford. Then he whispered to me. "Indeed, I think he's ill. Pray, run for the king's physician, Mr. Dale."

"Nay, he'd do well enough if he were alone with me. If you desire the physician's presence, my lord, he's easy to find."

I cared not a jot for Carford's anger, and was determined not to give ground. But we had no more time for quarreling.

"I am as loyal—as loyal to my father as any man in the kingdom," said the duke, in maudlin confidence. "But you know what's afoot?"

"A new war with the Dutch, I'm told, sir," said I.

"A fig for the Dutch. Hush, we must speak low; there may be papists about. There are some in the castle, Carford. Hush, hush. Some say my uncle's one, some say the secretary's one. Gentlemen, I—I say no more. Traitors have said that my father is—"

Carford interrupted him.

"Don't trouble your mind with these slanders, sir," he urged.

"I won't believe it. I'll stand by my father. But if the duke of York—but I'll say no more." His head fell on his breast. But in a moment he sprang to his feet crying "But I'm a Protestant. Yes, and I'm the king's son." He caught Carford by the arm, whispering, "Not a word of it. I'm ready. We know what's afoot. We're loyal to the king. We must save him. But if we can't—if we can't, isn't there one who—who—"

He lost his tongue for an instant. We stood looking at him till he spoke again. "One who would be a Protestant king?"

He spoke the last words loud and fiercely. It was the final effort, and he sank back in his chair in a stupor. Carford gave a hasty glance at his face.

"I'll go for the physician," he cried. "His grace may need blood-letting."

I stepped between him and the door as he advanced.

"His grace needs nothing," said I, "except the discretion of his friends. We've heard foolish words that we should not have heard tonight, my lord."

"I am sure they're safe with you," he answered.

"And with you?" I retorted quickly.

He drew himself up haughtily.

"Stand aside, sir, and let me pass."

"Where are you going?"

"To fetch the physician. I'll answer none of your questions."

I could not stop him without an open quarrel, and that I would not encounter, for it could only lead to my own expulsion. Yet I was sure that he would go straight to Arlington, and that every word the duke had spoken would be carried to York, and perhaps to the king before next morning. The king would be informed, if it were thought possible to prejudice him against his son, York, at least, would be warned of the mad scheme which was in the young duke's head. I drew aside and with a surly bow let Carford pass. He returned my salutation with an equal economy of politeness, and left me alone with Monmouth, who had now sunk into a heavy and uneasy sleep. I roused him and got him to bed, glad to think that his unwary tongue would be silent for a few hours at least. Yet what he had said brought me nearer to the secret and the mystery. There was indeed more afoot than the war with the Dutch. There was, if I mistook not, a matter that touched the religion of the king. Monmouth, whose wits were sharp enough, had gained scent of it. The wits went out as the wine went in, and he blurted out what he suspected, robbing his knowledge of all value by betraying its possession. Our best knowledge lies in what we are not known to know.

I repaired, thoughtful and disturbed, to my own small chamber, next the duke's, yet the night was fine and I had no mind for sleep. I turned back again and made my way onto the wall where it faces the sea. The wind was blowing fresh, and the sound of the waves filled my ears. No doubt the same sound hid the noise of my feet, for when I came to the wall I passed unheeded by three persons who stood in a group together. I knew all and made haste to pass by. The man was the king himself; the lady on his right was Mistress Barbara. In the third I recognized madame's lady, Louise de Querouaille. I proceeded some distance further, till I was at the end of the wall nearest the sea. There I took my stand, looking not at the sea, but covertly at the strange group. Presently two of them moved away; the third courtesied low, but did not accompany them. When they were gone she turned and leaned on the parapet of the wall with clasped hands. Drawn by some impulse I moved toward her. She was unconscious of my approach until I came quite near to her; then she turned on me a face stained with tears and pale with agitation and dismay. I stood before her, speechless, and she found no words in which to address me. I was too proud to force my company on her, and made as though to pass on with a bow, but her face arrested me.

"What ails you, Mistress Barbara?" I cried impetuously. She smoothed her face to composure as she answered me:

"Nothing, sir." Then she added carelessly, "unless it be that sometimes the king's conversation is too free for my liking."

"When you want me, I'm here," I said answering not her words but the frightened look that there was in her eyes.

For an instant I seemed to see her in an impulse to trust me and to lay bare what troubled her. The feeling passed; her face regained its natural hue and she said petulantly:

"Why yes; it seems fated that you should always be there, Simon; yet Betty Nasroth said nothing of it."

"It may be well for you that I am here," I answered hotly; for her scorn stirred me to say what I should have left unsaid.

I do not know how she would have answered, for at that moment we heard a shout from the watchman who stood looking over the sea. He hailed a boat that came prancing over the waves; a light answered his signal. Who came to the castle? Barbara's eyes and mine sought the ship; we did not know the stranger, but he was expected, for a minute later Darrell ran quickly by us with an eager look on his face; with him was the Count d'Albon, who had come with madame and Depuy, the duke of York's servant. They went by at the top of their speed and in visible excitement. Barbara forgot her anger and haughtiness in fresh, girlish interest.

"Who can it be?" she cried, coming so near to me that her sleeve touched mine and leaning over the wall, toward where the ship's black hull was to be seen far below in the moonlight by the jetty.

"Doubtless it's the gentleman madame expects," said I.

Many minutes passed, but through them Barbara and I stood silent side by side. Then the party came back through the gate, which had been opened for them. Depuy walked first, carrying a small trunk, two or three servants followed with more luggage, then came Darrell in company with a short man, who walked with a bold and confident air. The rest passed us, and the last pair approached. Now Darrell saw Mistress Barbara and doffed his hat to her. The newcomer did the like and more; he halted immediately opposite to us and looked curiously at her, sparing a curious glance for me. I bowed; she waited unmoved until the gentleman said to Darrell:

"Pray, present me."

"This, madame," said Darrell, in whose voice there was a ring of excitement and tremulous agitation, "is M. de Perrencourt, who has the honor of serving her royal highness the duchess. This lady, sir, is Mistress Barbara Quinton, maid of honor to the duchess of York and now in attendance on madame."

Barbara made a curtesy, M. de Perrencourt bowed. His eyes were fixed on her face; he studied her openly and fearlessly, yet the regard was difficult to resent, it was so calm, assured and dignified. It seemed beyond challenge, if not beyond reproach. I stood by in silence, angry at a scutiny so prolonged, but without title to interfere.

"I trust, madame, that we shall be better acquainted," he said at last, and with a lingering look at her face, passed on. I turned to her; she was gazing after him with eager eyes. My presence seemed forgotten; I would not remind her of it; I turned away in silence, and hastened after Darrell and his companions. The curve of the wall hid them from my sight, but I quickened my pace; it gained on them, for now I heard their steps ahead; I ran round the next corner, for I was ablaze with curiosity to see more of this man, who came at so strange an hour and yet was expected, who bore himself so loftily, and yet was but a gentleman-in-waiting, as I was. Round the next corner I should come in sight of him. Round I went, and I came plump into the arms of my good friend Darrell, who stood there, squarely across my path!

"Whither away, Simon?" said he coldly.

I halted, stood still, looked him in the face. He met my gaze with a calm, self-controlled smile.

"Why," said I, "I'm on my way to bed, Darrell. Let me pass, I beg you."

"A moment later will serve," said he.

"Not a moment," I replied testily, and caught him by the arm. He was as stiff as a rock, but I put out my strength, and in another moment should have thrown him aside. But he cried in a loud, angry voice:

"By the king's orders, no man is to pass this way."

Amazed, I fell back. But over his head, some twenty yards from us, I saw two men embracing one another warmly. Nobody else was near. Darrell's eyes were fixed on me, and his hand detained me in an eager grasp. But I looked hard at the pair there ahead of me; there was a cloud over the moon now, in a second it passed. The next moment the two had turned their backs and were walking off together. Darrell, seeing my fixed gaze, turned also. His face was pale, as if with excitement, but he spoke in cool, level tones.

"It's only M. Colbert greeting M. de Perrencourt," said he.

"Ah, of course," I cried, turning to him with a smile. "But where did M. Colbert get that star?" For the glitter of the decoration had caught my eye as it sparkled in the moonlight.

There was a pause before Darrell answered. Then he said:

"The king gave him his own star tonight in compliment to madame."

And in truth M. Colbert wore that star when he walked abroad next morning, and professed much gratitude for it to the king. I have wondered since whether he should not have thanked a humbler man. Had I not seen the star on the breast of the gentleman who embraced M. de Perrencourt should I have seen it on the breast of M. Colbert de Croissy? In truth I doubt it.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DEFERENCE OF HIS GRACE THE DUKE.

Certainly he had some strange ways, this M. de Perrencourt. It was not enough for him to arrive by night, nor to have his meeting with M. Colbert (whose star Darrell made me observe most particularly next morning) guarded from intruding eyes by the king's own order. He showed a predilection for darkness and was visible in the daytime only in madame's apartment, or when she went to visit the king. The other French gentlemen and ladies manifested much curiosity concerning the town and the neighborhood, and with madame and the duke of Monmouth at their head took part in many pleasant excursions. In a day or two the queen also and the duchess of York came from London, and the doings grew more gay and merry. But M. de Perrencourt was not to be tempted; no pastimes, no jaunts allured him; he did not put his foot outside the walls of the castle, and was little seen inside it. I, myself, did not set eyes on him for two days after my first sight of him; but after that I beheld him fairly often, and the more I saw him the more I wondered. Of a truth his retiring behavior was dictated by no want of assurance nor by undue modesty; he was not abashed in the presence of the great, and held himself as easily before the king as in the presence of a lackey. It was plain, too, that he enjoyed madame's confidence in no common degree, for when affairs of state were discussed and all withdrew saving madame (even the duke of Monmouth not being admitted), the last we saw as we made our bows and backed out of the doorway would be M. de Perrencourt standing in an easy and unconstrained attitude behind madame's chair and manifesting no overpowering sense of the signal honor paid to him by the permission to remain. As may be supposed, a theory sprang up to account for the curious regard this gentleman commanded; it was out about (some said that Lord Arlington himself gave his authority for the report) that M. de Perrencourt was legal guardian of his cousin Mlle. de Querouaille, and that the king had discovered special reasons for conciliating the gentleman by every means, and took as much pains to please him as to gain favor with the lady herself. Here was a good reason for M. de Perrencourt's distinguished treatment, and no less for the composure and calm with which M. de Perrencourt accepted it. To my mind, however, the manner of M. de Perrencourt's arrival and the incident of M. Colbert's star found scarcely a sufficient explanation in this ingenious conjecture; yet the story, thus circulated, was generally accepted and served its office of satisfying curiosity and blunting question well enough.

Again (for my curiosity would not be satisfied nor the edge of my questioning be turned) what had the duke of Monmouth to gain from M. de Perrencourt? Something, it seemed, or his conduct was most mysterious. He cared nothing for Mlle. de Querouaille, and I could not suppose that the mere desire to please his father would have weighed with him so strongly as to make him to all appearance the humble servant of this French gentleman. The thing was brought home most forcibly to my mind on the third evening after M. de Perrencourt's arrival. A private conference was held and lasted some hours. Outside the closed doors we all paced to and fro, hearing nothing save now and then madame's clear voice, raised, as it seemed, in exhortation or persuasion. The duke, who was glad enough to escape the tedium of state affairs, but at the same time visibly annoyed at his exclusion, sauntered listlessly up and down, speaking to nobody. Perceiving that he did not desire my company, I withdrew to a distance, and, having seated myself in a retired corner, was soon lost in consideration of my own fortunes, past and to come. The hour grew late, the gentlemen and ladies of the court having offered and accepted compliments and gallantries till invention and complaisance alike were exhausted, dropped off one by one in search of supper, wine or rest. I sat on in my corner. Nothing was to be heard save the occasional voices of the two musketeers on guard on the steps leading from the second story of the keep to the state apartments. I knew that I must move soon, for at night the gate on the stairs was shut. It was another of the peculiar facts about M. de Perrencourt that he alone of the gentlemen in waiting had been lodged within the precincts of the royal quarters, occupying an apartment next to the duke of York, who had his sister, madame, for his neighbor on the other side. The prolonged conference was taking place in the king's cabinet, further along the passage.

Suddenly I heard steps on the stairs, the word of the night was asked and Monmouth's voice made answer, "St. Denis," for just now everything was French, in compliment to madam. The steps continued to ascend, the light in the corridor was very dim, but a moment later I perceived Monmouth and Carford. Carford's arm was through his grace's, and he seemed to be endeavoring to restrain him. Monmouth shook him off with a laugh and an oath.

"I'm not going to listen," he cried. "Why should I listen? Do I want to hear the king praying to the virgin?"

"Silence, for God's sake, silence, your grace," implored Carford.

"That's what he does, isn't it? He and the queen's chaplain and the—"

"Pray, sir."

"And our good M. de Perrencourt, then?" He burst into a bitter laugh as he mentioned the gentleman's name.

I had heard more than was meant for my ears, and what was enough (if I may use a distinction drawn by my old friend the vicar) for my understanding. I was in doubt whether to declare my presence or not. Had Monmouth been alone I would have shown myself directly, but I did not wish Carford to be aware that I had overheard so much. I sat still a moment longer in hesitation; then I uttered a loud yawn, groaned, stretched myself, rose to my feet and gave a sudden and very obvious start as I let my eyes fall on the duke.

"Why, Simon," he cried, "what brings you here?"

"I thought your grace was in the king's cabinet," I answered.

"But you knew that I left them some hours since."

"Yes, but having lost sight of your grace, I supposed that you'd returned, and while waiting for you I fell asleep."

My explanation abundantly satisfied the duke; Carford maintained a wary silence.

"We're after other game than conferences tonight," said Monmouth, laughing again. "Go down to the hall and wait there for me, Simon. My lord and I are going to pay a visit to the women of madam and the duchess of York."

I saw that he was merry with wine; Carford had been drinking, too, but he grew more glum and malicious with his liquor. Neither their state nor the hour seemed fitted for the visit the duke spoke of, but I was helpless, and with a bow took my way down the stairs to the hall below, where I sat down on the steps that led up to one of the loop holes. A great chair, standing by the wall, served to hide me from observation. For a few moments nothing occurred. Then I heard a loud burst of laughter from above. Feet came running down the steps into the hall and a girl in a white dress darted across the floor. I heard her laugh and I knew that she was Barbara Quinton. An instant later came Monmouth, hot on her heels, and imploring her in extravagant words not to be so cruel and heartless as to fly from him. But where was Carford? I could only suppose that my lord had the discretion to stay behind when the duke of Monmouth desired to speak with the woman my lord sought for his wife.

In my humble judgment a very fine, large and subtle volume might be composed on the canons of eavesdropping—when a man may listen, when he may not, and for how long he may, to what end, for what motives, in what causes and on what provocations. It may be that the divines, who, as I understand, are greatly adept in the science of casuistry, have accomplished already the task I indicate. I know not; at least I have nowhere encountered the result of labors. But now I sat still behind the great chair and listened without doubt or hesitation. Yet how long I could have controlled myself I know not, for his grace made light of scruples that night and set bounds at naught. At first Mistress Barbara was merry with him, fencing and parrying in confidence that he would use no roughness nor an undue vehemence. But on he went, and presently a note of alarm sounded in her voice, as she prayed him to suffer her to depart and return to the duchess, who must have need of her.

"Nay, I won't let you go, sweet mistress. Rather, I can't let you go."

"Indeed, sir, I must go," she said. "Come, I will call my Lord Carford to aid in persuading your grace."

He laughed at the suggestion that a call for Carford would hinder him.

"He won't come," he said, "and if he came he would be my ally, not yours."

She answered now haughtily and coldly:

"Sir, Lord Carford is a suitor for my hand. It is your grace's knowledge that he is."

"But he thinks a hand none the worse because I have kissed it," retorted Monmouth. "You don't know how amiable a husband you're to have, Mistress Barbara."

I was on my feet now, and, peering round the chair, which hid me from them, I could see her standing against the wall, with Monmouth opposite to her. He offered to seize her hand, but she drew it away sharply. With a laugh he stepped nearer to her. A slight sound caught my ear, and, turning my head, I saw Carford on the lowest step of the stairs; he was looking at the pair, and a moment later stepped backward till he was almost hidden from my sight, though I could still make out the shape of his figure. A cry of triumph from Monmouth echoed low but intense through the hall. He had caught the elusive hand and was kissing it passionately. Barbara stood still and stiff. The duke, keeping her hand still in his, said mockingly:

"You pretty fool, would you refuse fortune? Hark, madame, I am a king's son."

I saw no movement in her, but the light was dim. He went on, lowering his voice a little, yet not much.

"And I may be a king; stranger things have come to pass. Wouldn't you like to be a queen?" He laughed as he put the question; he lacked the care or the cunning to make even a show of honesty.

"Let me go," I heard her whisper in a strained, timid voice.

"Well, for tonight you shall go sweetheart, but not without a kiss, I swear."

She was frightened now and sought to propitiate him, saying gently and with attempted lightness:

"Your grace has my hand prisoner. You can work your will on it."

"Your hand! I mean your lips this time," he cried, in audacious insolence. He came nearer to her, his arm crept round her waist. I had endured what I could, yes, and as long as I could, for I was persuaded that I could serve her better by leaving her unaided for the moment. But my limit was reached. I stepped out from behind the chair. But in an instant I was back again. Monmouth had paused. In one hand he held Barbara's hand; the other rested on her girdle, but he turned his head and looked at the stairs. Voices had come from there. He had heard them as I had, as Barbara had.

"You can't pass out," had come in a blustering tone from Carford.

"Stand aside, sir," was the answer, in a calm, imperative voice.

Carford hesitated for a single instant, then he seemed to shrink away, making himself small and leaving free passage for a man who came down the steps and walked confidently and briskly across the hall toward where the duke stood with Barbara.

Above us, at the top of the stairs, there were the sound of voices and the tread of feet. The conference was broken up and the parties to it were talking in the passage on their way to regain their own apartments. I paid no heed to them. My eyes were fixed on the intruder who came so boldly and unabashed up to the duke. I knew him now. He was M. de Perrencourt, madame's gentleman.

Without wavering or pausing, straight he walked. Monmouth seemed turned to stone. I could see his face set and rigid, although light failed me to catch that look in the eyes by which you may best know a man's mood. Not a sound nor a motion came from Carford. Barbara herself was stiff and still, her regard bent on M. de Perrencourt. He stood now directly over against her and Monmouth. It seemed long before he spoke. Indeed, I had looked for Monmouth's voice first, for an oath of vexation at the interruption, for a curse on the intruder and a haughty order to him to be gone and not interfere with what concerned his betters. No such word or any words issued from the mouth of the duke. And still M. de Perrencourt was silent. Carford stole covertly from the steps nearer to the group, until gliding across the hall, he was almost at the Frenchman's elbow. Still M. de Perrencourt was silent.

Slowly and reluctantly, as though in deference to an order that he loathed, but dare not disobey, Monmouth drew his arm away; he raised Barbara's hand; she drew back, leaning against the wall; the duke stood with his arms at his side, looking at the man who interrupted the sport and seemed to have power to control his will. Then at last, in crisp, curt, ungracious tones, M. de Perrencourt spoke.

"I thank you, M. le Duc," said he. "I was sure that you would perceive your error soon. This is not the woman you supposed; this is Mistress Quinton. I desire to speak with her; pray give me leave."

The king would not have spoken in this style to his pampered son, and the duke of York himself dared not have done it. But to touch uneasiness or self-distrust appeared in M. de Perrencourt's smooth, cutting speech. Truly he was high in madame's confidence and likely enough a great man in his own country, but, on my life, I looked to see the hot-tempered duke strike him across the face. Even I, who had been about to interfere myself, by some odd momentary turn of feeling, resented the insolence with which Monmouth was assailed. Would he not resent it much more for himself? No. For an instant I heard his quick breathing, the breathing of a man who fights passion, holding it under with great labor and struggling. Then he spoke; in his voice also there was passion hard held.

"Here, sir, and everywhere," he said, "you have only to command to be obeyed." Slowly he bent his head low, the gesture matching the humility of his words while it emphasized their unwillingness.

(To be continued.)

Dr. Thomas Welby has the smallest diocese in the world in the little island of St. Helena. His salary is $900 per year. There are also three other clergymen on the island.

Don't Stop Tobacco

SUDDENLY and rack the nerves. Use the tobacco you require and take Baco-Cure. It is the Original Guarantee Remedy (money refunded if it fail s to cure). BACO-CURO notifies you when to stop by removing the desire. It leaves the system free from every trace of nicotine.

Write for proofs of cures. 50c. or $1 boxes. 3 boxes (guaranteed cure) $2.50.

Baco-Curo

At Druggists, Or Eureka Chemical and Manufacturing Co., La Crosse, Wis.

DYSPEPSIA INDIGESTION, HEART-BURN and all Stomach Troubles quickly relieved and cured by FLORAPLEXION. Sample bottle free by mail or Druggists. Every drop is worth its weight in gold when you need it. Address, Franklin Hart, Dept. N New York.

MUNYON'S

Rheumatism Cure is guaranteed to be absolutely harmless, and a strong tonic in building up the weak and debilitated. It cures acute or muscular rheumatism in from one to five days. Sharp, shooting pains in any part of the body stopped in a few doses. A prompt, complete and permanent cure for lameness, soreness, stiff back and all pains in hips and joints. Chronic rheumatism, sciatica, lumbago or pain in the back are speedily cured. It seldom fails to give relief from one to two doses, and almost invariably cures before one bottle has been used. The Munyon Remedy Company prepare a separate cure for each disease. At all druggists—25 cents a vial. If you need medical advice write Prof. Munyon, 1505 Arch Street, Philadelphia. It is absolutely free.

RHEUMATISM

Health is Wealth.

DR. E. C. WEST'S NERVE AND BRAIN TREATMENT

THE ORIGINAL, ALL OTHERS IMITATIONS.

Is sold under positive Written Guarantee, by authorized agents only, to cure Weak Memory, Dizziness, Wakefulness, Fits, Hysteria, Quickness, Night Losses, Evil Dreams, Lack of Confidence, Nervousness, Lassitude, all Drains, Youthful Errors, or Excessive Use of Tobacco, Opium, or Liquor, which leads to Misery, Consumption, Insanity and Death. At store or by mail, $1 a box; six for $5; with written guarantee to cure or refund money. Sample package, containing five days' treatment, with full instructions, 25 cents. One sample only sold to each person. At store or by mail.

Red Label Special Extra Strength. For Impotency, Loss of Power, Lost Manhood, Sterility or Barrenness, $1 a box; six for $5, with written guarantee to cure in 30 days. At store or by mail.

Myers Dillon Drug Co., S. E. Corner 16th and Farnam Sts., Omaha, Neb.

Patronize Home Industries

By Purchasing Goods Made at the Following Nebraska Factories.

ZAWNINGS AND TENTS.

OMAHA TENT AND RUBBER CO.

(Successors Omaha Tent and Awning Co.) Manufacturers tents, awnings. Job