# A Modern Mercenary. BY E. & H. HERON.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters. Maasau, a little duchy in Europe, which is maintained its independence because of the shrewd statesman, Baron capital, by the shrewd statesman, Baron von Elmur. England's influence is strong and Major Courseilor's presence means much. France and Russia are also playing the diplomatic game. At the time the story opens John Rallywood, a young Englishman, who has served seven years in the Maassu frontier cavairy, is about to resign his commission, when Selpdorf, the chancellor and "man of the hour," sends for him and makes him a Gentieman of the Guard. Rallywood meets Valerie Selpdorf, the chancellor's daughter. The Gentlemen of the Guard object to the appointment of the Englishman, Unziar, a leader and a suitor for Valerie's hand, arranges for the effair of henor involved, misses his shot and, with his companions, is overcome by the manly bearing of Rallywood. The guests at the palace ball overwhelm the young Englishman with congratulations, Courtess Sagan takes a great interest in Rallywood and invites him to Castle Sagan with a party. Von Elmur plots with Selpdorf in behalf of Germany to disband the Guard. At the castle Valerie offends the duke. Sagan, fearing that the women will spoil the plot, wishes to cause the death of Valerie and his wife. Von Elmur will not consent because he wishes to marry Valerie, and still believes he can carry out his plan with Selpdorf. Meantime, the Guards, Unziar, Colendorp and Rallywood, must be disposed of, Von Elmur, Unziar and Rallywood woo Valerie. Countess Sagan foresees the danger of the young Englishman and warns him. Colendorp refuses to be a traitor to 'the duke and is murderen by Sagan in the presence of Von Elmur. The followers of Sagan attack the Guard in the castle. Rallywood and Unziar are overpowered, but Major Counsellor in disguise as the duke appears and the whole affair is hushed up. Sagan does not dare to carry out his present plot, since Germany, Russia and England would know the facts. Countess Sagan and Valerie escape death from a pre-arranged runaway and Rallywood inds them badly frightened at a frontier fort. Here the countess attempts to humble Valerie, but Ral von Elmur. England's influence is strong and Major Counsellor's presence means much. France and Russia are also playing

#### CHAPTER XXV.

A Question of Two Moralities. The road toward the blockhouse ran along the river bank past the Kofn ford. They went slowly on together through the starry, windy night, Rallywood with his hands on the bridle and the wounded man holding limply to the saddle.

Counsellor, with an unaccustomed warfare in his heart-rage and the pity of it working together-stared into space across the leaping river.

As the two men drew near the ford they saw the dim figure of a horseman riding down the bank on the opposite side, with the evident intention of crossing. The approaches to the ford were flooded, for the angry water fretted out its banks at such times and deepened into dangerous swirls over the crossing place.

Rallywood checked the horse to shout and signal to the man that the ford was impassable, but his voice was drowned by the that the rider was Anthony Unzlar.

It was now evident that Uniziar saw Ral- gether. lywood for in answer to the latter's signs that he must make for the shallows lower of the current was fast drawing him away, but with another strong effort he got the horse's head round; they heard his faint shout upon the wind, then the words came more clearly:

"Carry them on-Selpdorf!" He flung something forward; the gale caught and hurled it on the rocks at Rallywood's feet. When they looked again Unziar had disappeared.

Hurrying to the blockhouse, Rallywood sent off some troopers to Unziar's assistance; then with some difficulty got his prisoner, who was stiff and dizzy, on his feet and supported him to the room where Mme. de Sagan and Valerie had rested on the night at all?" of the snow storm. But he scarcely yet knew the worst, Pres-

ently Counsellor spoke. "This thing has gone beyond a joke," he said. "What does it mean?" The glance playfulness like a child's. from under the overhanging gray brows had

"My orders are simple enough. I am to keep you here until tomorrow afternoon at 3

"By doing so you will rule Maasau as a

free state and bring a most serious defeat upon British policy." Counsellor's voice was rasping. "Are you prepared for that?" Both men were strenuous, and bred deep Into the bone of each were the same dominant qualities. "I am prepared to carry out my orders,"

answered Rallywood; "I had them practically from the duke himself." "The duke is of the same mind in which I

found him at the castle, though he may be forced to dissemble," asserted Counsellor; then with a twist he sat up as his glance fell upon the square dark object lying on the table between them. "John Rallywood, do you know what that is "" "The dispatches thrown to me by Unziar."

'That case is mine; it contains my private instructions; you can guess something of their importance from the fact that I have been robbed of them. You must give them back to me! As an Englishman and an honest man I call upon you to give them

Rallywood's long, nervous fingers closed over the packet. "It is impossible!" he said. "As an Eng-

lishman, yes, but as an honcet man, well, it—it is hard to say."
"Are you mad?" cried Counsellor.

"I have not had long to think it out and It is a tangled question," replied Rallywood

"A tangled question? I take it you are

first of all an Englishman? "In my private capacity, and that deals

with my private honor; but I have undertaken another responsibility from which I cannot withdraw at pleasure. I am a sworn

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(Copyright, 1899, Doubleday & McClure Co. | soldier of Maasau and as such my public

honor has first claim." It was a simple rendering of a tremendous problem, but it served for Rallywood.

"Theu-" said Counsellor. There was a rush and a souffle, but Rallywood was young and strong and more ac-

"Confound you!" Counsellor fell back a step or two, breathing hard. There are some situations which by their elemental force Kofn guardhouse was one of these. pierced to the bedrock of national loyalty. Perhaps Blivinski was right. Love of coun-

pitted against each other. "Will you give me your parole?" asked Rallywood with his back to the door. Counsellor drew out a big watch.

by the irony of circumstances they were

"For fifteen minutes," he said. "It is nov half-past 9; at forty-five minutes past I shall hold myself once more free to do what I can. You understand? In the meantime we

Counsellor put his watch back into his pocket.

Rallywood stood up. "I cannot argue," he said, "but major, you

tive than the major.

will believe me when I say that I see my duty plainly. I refuse!" "I have had a great regard for you," re-

plied Counsellor, slowly, "but if you were my own son, by heaven, I'd blow your brains out tonight! Give me those dispatches." There was a rapid movement, and the gleam of a pistol barrel in his hand.

"Thank God!" It was not more than the

faintest whisper from Rallywood as he sprang at his companion. But there was no report, only an ominous click as Counsellor flung the unloaded re-

volver in Rallywood's face with a bitter word. "It was not loaded."

Hardly had they closed when the door was opened and a couple of men supported Unziar into the room. The water ran in streams from his clothes to the floor, while he stood and stared at the two combatants, who had fallen apart.

"I suppose they sent you to meet me Rallywood," he said in English, "It is lucky, for I'm done! You must carry those dispatches on without delay, for they must reach the chancellor at the earliest possible moment. Go; there is no time to lose!" Rallywood pointed to Counsellor.

"This gentleman is my prisoner. You will keep him here until further orders. Meantime I will ride on with these to Revonde." Counsellor and Unziar remained together but no word passed between them till out in the windy night they heard the beat of hoofs as Rallywood rode away on his mission.

#### CHAPTER XXVI.

Love's Handicap. As Rallywood galloped steadily through the night under the shrinking moon, with the tsa behind him and the pearl-gray road harsh-throated noises of the night. Weak withering away into the level distance as was the startight, something of the loose, ahead, it happened that the two women of reckless swing in the saddle told Rallywood whom he must have had some thoughts during that lonely ride met and spoke to-

"Valerie, I called for you to go with me the Abenfeldts' reception, because I have down. Unziar waved some object over his a question to ask you," began Isolde at head as if to call attention to it. The suck once when the door of the carriage was

closed. The passing lamps shone varyingly upon their faces as they passed through the lighted streets and Mme, de Sagan looked

at her companion. "Where is Captain Rallywood?" she added abruptly.

His name had not passed between them couple of footmen placing it with the quick since the interview at the blockhouse. "I cannot tell you. I don't know," said Valerie, coldly.

"O, my dear child, all is fair in love and cloak. Why be so dreadfully cross with me

"Is it necessary to recur to the subject "Will you never forgive me, I wonder?"

lovely face, where the underlying spirit of steps. mockery was transmuted into an innocent "On the contrary, I thank you."

"Why-for humbling him? Valerie, you "Happy!" Valerie could not forego the

very womanly triumph, "very happy! And you made me so." "But," said Isolde with some perplexity, "you would have it that he did not mean what he said."

In her heart she thought Valerie a grea goose for making any such disclaimer. Vanity has knowledge of no tongue whereby to interpret pride.

"No, but it showed me what he was." "I wonder how Baron von Elmur would like to hear that his future wife was not ashamed to declare her love for another man," retorted Isolde.

"I mean to tell him." "No, no, Valerie, don't!" exclaimed Mme. de Sagan, whose weakness exuded very often in a sort of kind-heartedness. should not tell him. Such a confidence is apt to turn sour in a husband's memory. You may trust me-I will keep your secret.'

Valerie smiled scornfully. "But I can keep a secret! For instance, want to hear where Captain Rallywood is because I know the count hates him, and also," she nodded her head slowly, "and also our dear friend Baron von Elmur."

Valerie was startled. 'Baron von Elmur?" she repeated.

"O, you quite mistake the matter. The ill-feeling has nothing to do whatever with hate him on very different grounds. Everything appears to interest men nowadays but ourselves!" she ended sadly.

Because he is English, perhaps? "Well, yes, it has something to do with it. You remember that last night at the castle? conclude it was Jack who spoiled their her hand upon his arm. plans when Simon and the baron went to the duke's apartments."

"The count and Baron von Elmur together? What did they go for?" The question dried up the little stream of

fight—I'd back Jack against most people! That is one reason I-liked him. We heard looking his last upon them. shots, and though I was herribly frightened I told you none of the particulars, because M. Selpdorf knows all about it. yet I knew all. Speak to me, Valerie! What are you thinking of?"

"I was thinking of Captain Rallywood," answered the girl at last, offering the excuse Isolde would be most likely to accept has succeeded? Then why are you so sad?" as true. "I did not know he had so many enemies. But he is not in Revende?"

"No, he has not been at the barracks only hungry and dog-tired." lince yesterday afternoon. I sent him an "Then cat," she said. "Let me give you invitation. You never give me credit for some wine." sincerity, but I am steady in my friendships. do not mean to drop him because he talked a glass of wine. all that nonsense at Kofn Ford. You boasted about M. Selpdorf's power-make him use land," she said. Then touching it with her now to save Rallywood. I begin to be- lips in the graceful fashion of Mansau, she lieve that you are really as cold as you pre- handed it to him. tend to be, Valerie, you care so little! "Hark! I think I hear my father arriv-

would serve him if I could." 'I shall see my father when I return to-

ing, and there is something I must say to She clasped her hands nervously, the bare ight, I promise you. shapely hands with their gleaming rings, Isolde buttoned her glove thoughtfully. and Rallywood watched her and felt as if

'You must be careful not to let him sus-pect that you have any special interest in he were dreaming. "Captain Rallywood, I want to thank you Jack," she said, "for that would be merely an additional reason for letting Rallywood Valerie could not misunderstand the euph-

"Isolde, my father is not a savage!" she exclaimed.

"Perhaps not," said Mme. de Sagan simply. 'He is, I know, a very charming man in society, but my experience goes to show that every man is a savage-au fond. Words which embody the opinion of more

women than one cares to number. It was 3 o'clock when an officer of the guard, leaving the wind-swept darkness of the country behind him, rode through the north gate of Revende into the vivid black and white perspective of the city, where close outside the brilliant line of electric lights night berself seemed to stand incarnated, a lealous intensity of blackness,

of horses at certain points, and on the whole true, destroy all other emotions. The situation at had made good time of the ride. Now he crossed the bridge that lies opposite to the point at issue between these two men gate of the palace and mounted the curving streets toward the Chancellerie. try was part of their physical equipment, yet

Rallywood had picked up Unglar's relays

noblest gentleman alive!" Rallywood did not hesitate. There was one thing Valerie should know and be certain of in the uncertain future.

"Give me a moment, mademoiselle," he exclaimed, detaining her. "I see you do not quite understand. I could not expect you to to admit M. Selpdorf, who replied stiffly to understand. But now-now that I am Rallywood's bow. leaving Maasau, I must tell you the truth.

"I knew it, and yet you-O, say no more! For my sake you stooped to say it. It was not true! But I knew that." He took her hand between his own in a

firm, strong clasp. "Listen, mademoiselle. It was true! Since first I saw you it always has been

"I remember!" she said, breathlessly. She

could not help saying it. "Do vou?" he answered. The temptation overhanging portice as a carriage dashed up on the other side. The high doors above were which he did everything, and which she had "Unzlar is with him—with Major Coun-

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Man of the Hour," Counsellor once said to Rallywood, and the ma-I can never thank you enough for that night | jor's sayings had a trick of lingering in the at Kofn Ford. I understood-pray believe | memory. With the chancellor there still re-I understood it-and I think you are the mained the key to the situation. He was implicated in the conspiracy, but he had less the moment; it crossed his mind that this to gain and far more to lose than the others. was a mercenary after all and to be bought. American physicians. A dangerous condition and one possible of development. All this passed in a flash through Rally-

wood's mind as the opposite door opened "I was not prepared to see you this even-

Perhaps you will believe it some day. I am | ing." began Selpdorf.

hold it in his band. Selpdorf eved him.

"From whom?" "Lieutenant Unziar."

"From Lieutenant Unzlar?" Selpdorf repeated tentatively. The man whom I ordered you to keep at

the blockhouse?" The chancellor half expected to hear that treets toward the Chancellerie.

to wander a little was too sweet. "You Counsellor was also in Revonde, and that conscious in a single carriage that had been He swung from his horse at the foot of wore this cloak"—he touched it softly with Rallywood with an unassuming, but unsent rolling down the incline on the line the broad flight of granite steps under its his fingers, then laid his hand over hers despeakable effrontery had called to explain where the outgoing mail train could not

which is in flood. Therefore I have come."

thought Selpdorf.

the dispatches?"

me?" he said at last.

replied Rallywood slowly.

what the packet contains?"

Was it possible Rallywood had merely

shirked facing the difficulty in this way

"Ah. Major Counsellor? And these are

the frontier of Mansau!" said Rallywood.

thumb, regarding Rallywood as he did so.

"Good! And how do you come to know

"The persons who robbed Major Coun-

When we owe you a recognition of these high qualities?" "I want nothing, your excellency, but to "I have brought the dispatches, your ex- go out from this house a free man," recellency," replied Rallywood, taking the turned Rallywood coldly, "Reconsider your words, Captain Rallypacket from his pocket, but continuing to "Even if other difficulties had not arisen." went on Rallywood, "I may remind your excellency that a soldier's oath does not cover robbery and assassination." Selpdorf was, and looked, astonished, "And your prisoner? 'Pray tell me what you mean."

"I don't understand you," he said gravely. "I found Major Counsellor alone and un-

placing it under another cover. He

recognized it at the blockhouse."

decision to make at the blockhouse?"

"Yes," said Rallywood simply.

Selpdorf raised his brown.

flung open and a roll of red cloth dropped grown to love-"and ever since I have car- sellor at Koin Ford. Unziar was unable to of him-in a railway accident. But the plan was a curiously stupid one, for nothing could satisfactorily explain Major Counsellor's presence there, since it was well known to the British legation in Revonde that he was entering, not leaving Massau." Selpdorf stood silent. Here was another ill-devised amendment born of Count Sagan's blundering brain.

"It is a very strange story," he said at length. "Had the train come into collision with the carriage which you assert was on the down line-' "The troops from Kofn and the railway

people at Alfau can prove that." "The mail might have been derailed, with no one can tell what loss of life." "Count Simon holds life cheap,"

way can be safe. Not even the life of Mile. The chancellor was moved for once. "You are out of your senses!" he said

sternly. "It is true!" Both men looked round. Valerie had en-

"Father, you must hear me before youbefore you-

She glanced at Rallywood and stopped. "Go, Valerie; you have nothing to do with these things." Selpdorf met her as she came toward him.

"You must hear me tonight, father. You proach. are mistaken; I have had a great deal to do with them. I know all that Captain Rallywood has said to you-yee, I had a right to know. For it was I who brought Major Counsellor to the duke's apartments at the if he had chosen to prefer his country's cause castle, because I knew there was a plot against his highness. But I did not know it was a German plot in which Baron von Elmur was using Count Sagan. O, you must be on your guard against them!" 'Who has been frightening you with all

"You don't understand me! Father, I Then I guessed his highness was in danger, and I went to warn him. Captain Rallywood, tell my father of Count Sagan's visit to the duke's rooms in the middle of the night with Baron von Elmur. I-we, Isolde and I-heard the shots. You do not know it, but there was a plot. Your life is not safe. Captain Rallywood is right; no life that stands in Count Sagan's way is safe! And you on whom the state de-

try to kill me? She was clinging to his arm. "To kill you? If I thought that was true-if I could believe he meant to injure

The chancellor raised his eyes. At this moment—diplomatically—he was superb. He had an air of sagacious decision, an air of holding a master stroke in reserve, whereas he was in reality merely retiring to a

negative position to wait upon events. "Tell me the story," he said. "There is nothing further to tell," replied Railywood. "Mademoiselle has given you the main facts. But for her Maasau would today be a province of Germany, in fact if thies. But-"These are Major Counsellor's private dis- not in name."

patches, which were stolen from him within "I have been misinformed and deceived a time as this," he answered gently; "I in an incomprehensible manner," the chan- cannot foresee what may happen. I may Selpdorf's round eyes showed their lids in cellor said emphatically. There was still an odd flicker. The attack was sudden. He the matter of Counsellor's dispatches. Nothbrushed his moustache upwards with a ing was now to be gained by keeping them, But Rallywood, though he saw the purpose thoughtful movement of the finger and whereas, by giving them back to the old diplomatist, Maasau was sure to profit for "Then why have you brought them to the time at least. The difficulty was to get rid of the packet without loss of prestige to "Because a soldier should see no further himself. "Now as to Major Counsellor's than the point of his sword, your excellency," dispatches," he added doubtfully.

"You will send them back to him," said Valerie eagerly.

"You cannot see the difficulty of my position." The chancellor laid his hand upon

### "I, too, am proud," she whispered. And sellor did not even take the precaution of BRACES BODY AND BRAIR.

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"It seems to me then that you had a Sustain the System. But it was not a subject to bear discus-Vin Mariani (Mariani Wine) in recommended as a topic by the medical profession "As a soldier of Massau you decided rightly." Selpdorf misjudged Rallywood for all over the world. It has received written

recommendations from more than 8,000 Mariani Wine stimulates, strengthens and "But as a man I now wish to resign my sustains the system and braces body and brain. It gives strength and is an aid to health and longevity. Makes the old young:

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her shoulder. "To be frank with you, and Rallywood. "No life that stands in his in confidence, Captain Rallywood, I have not been ignorant that an understanding existed between Count Sagan and the Baron von Elmur. I have even been obliged to countenance it to a certain extent. As you know, they are aware that these dispatches have been sent to me. If I use them as my daughter suggests, I need scarcely point out that trouble must ensue, since I, more er less, represent Maasau. Now we cannot afford to offend Germany. It only awaits a pretext to hurl down its army of occupation upon us. Had I never had those dispatches the way might have been easier."

His glance at Rallywood held a large re-"But, father, in honesty and justice."

"It is a case of private justice as opposed

to national necessity. If Captain Rallywood

had sacrificed his public to his private honor.

to his oath of fealty-" Rallywood understood. "No one knows I am here," he said.

"Ah, true!" "No one need ever know where the dispatches have been. In four hours they this nonsense?" asked Selpdorf, with cold shall be with Major Counsellor at the British legation.

"If you, Captain Rallywood, will bear know how Captain Colendorp died. I saw the whole responsibility that would simplify it-the struggle and his fall over the cliff. the matter. Otherwise it is war." Selpdorf looked meaningly at Rallywood as he spoke. But Valerie was not deceived.

"Not that! Not that!" she cried. "It must be that or nothing." Selpdorf did not look at her, and he spoke almost brusquely. "I know what it means. They will say

there no other way? I cannot let him Rallywood's face changed. Fate was pends-you who alone can uphold her liberty-you are the first they will try to de- cruehing her two strange gifts into his stroy! He hates you, else why should he hands, leve and death at the same moment. He crossed to Valerie's side, and drawing

he was false to his oath. O, father, il

her to him his gray eyes looked their courage and their happiness into hers. "My darling, this makes it easy, whatever "It may be death! It may be death!" He

winced at the low, agonized whisper. She turned back to her father. "Father, you have power to do anything you please in Maasau. You will save him for me. You can save him. Promise me

that or I cannot let him go!" Selpdorf was touched. He liked Rallywood. There was much in the singlehearted soldier that appealed to his sympa-"I will not deceive you, Valerie, at such

not be able to prevent the worst. Captain Rallywood holds the dispatches. He offers to sacrifice himself for the state, and the decision rests with you." Valerie buried her face in her hands. The clock moved noiselessly on and on, and

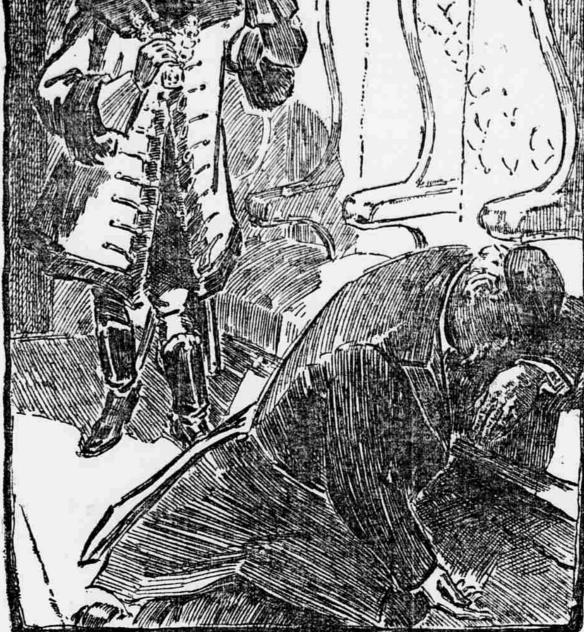
the very air seemed to throb in the silence. Then the girl raised her head and looked steadily at Rallywood. "It would not be love if I said otherwise, You would not love me if I said otherwise.

You must go, John!" (To Be Continued.)

### Worms

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'RALL YWOOD STEPPED INSIDE AND LIT A MATCH. from step to step down to the pavement, a | ried the glove you despised. And, though | ride on at once after crossing the river

"Oh, I don't ask you to believe me now,

he said, bitterly, "I am not noble, mad-

emoiselle. I was only too proud to say I

loved you that night, as"-with another

ittle smile-"I was only too proud not to

Valerie raised her face, and her eyes were

of her speech, would not understand its sig-

nificance. He led her toward the door by

"You must go, mademoiselle. I-dare not

keep you with me longer. Goodby, and may

She stopped suddenly and kissed the hand

"Then it was true-thank God!"

which she had entered.

God be with you, Valerie!"

"But-but-"

ay it before."

full of light.

this is my goodbye, I will carry it-always." deftness of use until it reached the carriage. As she alighted Mile. Selpdorf recognized the tall figure in the travel-stained riding

"Captain Rallywood, where have you comfrom?" she asked almost involuntarily. "From the frontier, mademoiselle." "Will you give me your arm? What has

happened? Has Major Counsellor came Valerie looked steadily back into the back?" she whispered as they went up the "He is at the ford. He has met with an

accident." Valerie said no more, but as she entered the hall she read Rallywood's face. "Has his excellency returned?" she asked of an attendant. "Then place refreshments in the small library. Captain Rallywood, I will join you in a few moments. M. Selpdorf will be home very soon. He is anxious

to see you." It was a little necessary make-believe be fore the numerous servants. How far it deceived them may be faintly guessed when one considers any one's secrets in relatio to any one's servants. "Man designs his own game," thought

Rallywood as he followed the servant into whose charge he was given, "or he is forced to stand out and circumstances play it for him. In the years all is one." Whichever way the issue of this night's work turned, Maasau and Valerie must both pass from his life forever. The one supreme obstacle which lurks always beside the

mercenary's path had arisen to bar his advance at last. Valerie opened the door softly. She was trembling and afraid, but she would not be outdone in generosity by Rallywood. She had determined to thank him for the words spoken at Kofn Ford, and to show him how entirely she comprehended their chivalrous intention. But when her eyes fell upon him all thought of self faded. He was standing midway between the gleaming wine and you or with me. The count and you Elmur glass of the side table and the flickering glow of the open stove, upright and stately, as he ever appeared to her, but in his new attitude her sharpened senses perceived a sug-

> gestion of disheartenment and solitude. Swept away by the feeling of the moment, she cressed the room to his side and laid 'What is it? Something has happened,'

Rallywood looked down at her. The beautiful eyes like starlit darkness, her clearhued loveliness, the soft, dusky curls above her brow, her girlish reserve and petulances, "How should I know? But there was a all her sweet, unapproachable personality enhanced to pain the knowledge that he was

> "Nothing to distress you, mademoiselle "Then tell me; I know so much already." "I wish I could, but I think his excellency

might prefer to tell you himself." "Is it good news, then? Major Counsellor "Sad, mademoiselle?" he answered with a smile. "Men often look sad when they are

"To the success of Massau and of Eng

She drew him to a table and poured out