

than all, rations were miserably short. The French garrison were living upon salted horse-flesh, and you may guess, therefore, at the condition of the civilians' victualing department. Wine was, however, to be had in sufficient plenty; and I used frequently to pass a few hours at a place of entertainment kept by an Andalusian woman, whose bitter hatred of the French invaders, and favorable disposition toward the British were well known to me, though successfully concealed from Napoleon's soldiers, many of whom—sous-officers chiefly—were her customers. My chief amusement there was playing at dominoes for a few glasses. I played, when I had a choice, with a smart, goodish-looking sous-lieutenant of voltigeurs—a glib-tongued chap, of the sort that tell all they know, and something over, with very little pressing. His comrades addressed him as Victor, the only name I then knew him by. He and I became very good friends, the more readily that I was content he should generally win. I soon reckoned Master Victor up; but there was an old, wiry *gredin* of a sergeant-major sometimes present, whose suspicious manner caused me frequent twinges. One day especially I caught him looking at me in a way that sent the blood galloping through my veins like wild-fire. A look, Mr. Tape, which may be very likely followed in a few minutes afterward by a halter, or by half-a-dozen bullets through one's body, is apt to excite an unpleasant sensation."

"I should think so. I wouldn't be in such a predicament for the creation."

"It's a situation that would hardly suit you, Mr. Tape," replied the veteran, with a grim smile. "Well, the gray-headed old fox followed up his look with a number of interesting queries concerning my birth, parentage, and present occupation, my answers to which so operated upon him, that I felt quite certain when he shook hands with me, and expressed himself perfectly satisfied, and sauntered carelessly out of the place, that he was gone to report his surmises, and would be probably back again in two twos with a file of soldiers and an order for my arrest. He had put me so smartly through my facings, that although it was quite a cold day for Spain, I give you my honor I perspired to the very tips of my fingers and toes. The chance of escape was, I felt, almost desperate. The previous evening a rumor had circulated that the British general had stormed Ciudad Rodrigo, and might therefore be already hastening in his seven-league boots, toward Badajoz. The French were consequently more than ever on the alert, and keen eyes watched with sharpened eagerness for indications of sympathy or correspondence between the citizens and the advancing army. I jumped up as soon as the sergeant-major had disappeared, and was about to follow, when the mistress of the place approached, and said, hastily, 'I have heard all, and if not quick, you will be sacrificed by those French dogs: this way.' I

followed to an inner apartment, where she drew from a well-concealed recess, a French officer's uniform, complete. 'On with it!' she exclaimed, as she left the room. 'I know the word and countersign.' I did not require twice telling, you may be sure; and in less than no time was togged off beautifully in a lieutenant's uniform, and walking at a smart pace toward one of the gates. I was within twenty yards of the corps-de-garde, when whom should I run against but Sous-lieutenant Victor! He stared, but either did not for the moment recognize me, or else doubted the evidence of his own senses. I quickened my steps—the guard challenged—I gave the words, 'Napoleon, Austerlitz!'—passed on; and as soon as a turn of the road hid me from view, increased my pace to a run. My horse, I should have stated, had been left in sure hands at about two miles' distance. Could I reach so far, there was, I felt, a chance. Unfortunately, I had not gone more than five or six hundred yards, when a hubbub of shouts, and musket-shots in my rear, announced that I was pursued. I glanced round; and I assure you, gentlemen, I have seen in my life many pleasanter prospects than met my view—Richmond Hill, for instance, on a fine summer day. Between twenty and thirty voltigeurs, headed by my friend Victor, who had armed himself, like the others, with a musket, were in full pursuit; and once, I was quite satisfied, within gun-shot, my business would be very effectually and speedily settled.

"I ran on with eager desperation; and though gradually neared by my friends, gained the hut where I had left the horse in safety. The voltigeurs were thrown out for a few minutes. They knew, however, that I had not passed the thickish clumps of trees which partially concealed the cottage; and they extended themselves in a semi-circle to inclose, and thus make sure of their prey. Juan Sanchez, luckily for himself, was not at home; but my horse, as I have stated, was safe, and in prime condition for a race. I saddled, bridled, and brought him out, still concealed by the trees and hut from the French, whose exulting shouts, as they gradually closed upon the spot, grew momentarily louder and fiercer. The sole desperate chance left was to dash right through them; and I don't mind telling you, gentlemen, that I was profoundly frightened, and that but for the certainty of being instantly sacrificed, without benefit of clergy, I should have surrendered at once. There was, however, no time for shilly-shallying. I took another pull at the saddle-girths, mounted, drove the only spur I had time to strap on sharply into the animal's flank, and in an instant broke cover in full and near view of the expecting and impatient voltigeurs; and a very brilliant reception they gave me—quite a stunner in fact! It's a very grand thing, no doubt, to be the exclusive object of attention to twenty or thirty gallant men, but so little selfish, gentlemen, have I been from my youth upward in the article of 'glory,' that I assure you

I should have been remarkably well-pleased to have had a few companions—the more the merrier—to share the monopoly which I engrossed as I came suddenly in sight. The flashes, reports, bullets, *sacrés*, which in an instant gleamed in my eyes, and roared and sang about my ears were deafening. How they all contrived to miss me I can't imagine, but miss me they did; and I had passed them about sixty paces, when who should start up over a hedge, a few yards in advance, but my domino-player, Sous-lieutenant Victor! In an instant his musket was raised within two or three feet of my face. Flash! bang! I felt a blow as if from a thrust of red-hot steel; and for a moment made sure that my head was off. With difficulty I kept my seat. The horse dashed on, and I was speedily beyond the chance of capture or pursuit. I drew bridle at the first village I reached, and found that Victor's bullet had gone clean through both cheeks. The marks, you see, are still plain enough."

This was quite true. On slightly separating the gray hairs of the captain's whiskers, the places where the ball had made its entrance and exit were distinctly visible.

"A narrow escape," I remarked.

"Yes, rather; but a miss is as good as a mile. The effusion of blood nearly choked me; and it was astonishing how much wine and spirits it required to wash the taste out of my mouth. I found," continued Mr. Smith, "on arriving at head-quarters, that Ciudad Rodrigo had fallen as reported, and that Lord Wellington was hurrying on to storm Badajoz before the echo of his guns should have reached Mas-sena or Soult in the fool's paradise where they were both slumbering. I was of course for some time on the sick-list, and consequently only assisted at the assault of Badajoz as a distant spectator—a part I always preferred when I had a choice. It was an awful, terrible business," added Mr. Smith, with unusual solemnity. "I am not much of a philosopher that I know of, nor, except in service hours, particularly given to religion, but I remember, when the roar and tumult of the fierce hurricane broke upon the calm and silence of the night, and a storm of hell-fire seemed to burst from and encircle the devoted city, wondering what the stars, which were shining brightly overhead, thought of the strife and dim they looked so calmly down upon. It was gallantly done, however," the veteran added, in a brisker tone, "and read well in the Gazette; and that perhaps is the chief thing."

"But what," I asked, "has all this to do with the charming Coralie and your love-adventure?"

"Every thing to do with it, as you will immediately find. I remained in Badajoz a considerable time after the departure of the army, and was a more frequent visitor than ever at the house of the excellent dame who had so opportunely aided my escape. She was a kind-hearted soul with all her vindictiveness; and

now that the French were no longer riding rough-shod over the city, spoke of those who were lurking about in concealment—of whom there were believed to be not a few, with sorrow and compassion. At length the wound I had received at Lieutenant Victor's hands was thoroughly healed, and I was thinking of departure, when the Andalusian dame introduced me in her taciturn, expressive way to a charming young Frenchwoman, whose husband, a Spaniard, had been slain during the assault or sack of the city. The intimacy thus begun soon kindled on my part, into an intense admiration. Coralie was gentle, artless, confiding as she was beautiful, and moreover—as Jeannette, her sprightly, black-eyed maid informed me in confidence—extremely rich. Here, gentlemen, was a combination of charms to which only a heart of stone could remain insensible, and mine at the time was not only young, but particularly sensitive and tender, owing in some degree, I daresay, to the low diet to which I had been so long confined; for nothing, in my opinion, takes the sense and pluck out of a man so quickly as that. At all events I soon surrendered at discretion, and was coyly accepted by the blushing lady. 'There was only one obstacle,' she timidly observed, 'to our happiness. The relatives of her late husband, by law her guardians, were prejudiced, mercenary wretches, anxious to marry her to an old hunk of a Spaniard, so that the property of her late husband, chiefly consisting of precious stones—he had been a lapidary—might not pass into the hands of foreigners.' I can scarcely believe it now," added Mr. Smith, with great heat; "but if I didn't swallow all this stuff like sack and sugar, I'm a Dutchman! The thought of it, old as I am, sets my very blood on fire.

"At length," continued Mr. Marmaduke Smith, as soon as he had partially recovered his equanimity—"at length it was agreed, after all sorts of schemes had been canvassed and rejected, that the fair widow should be smuggled out of Badajoz as luggage in a large chest, which Jeannette and the Andalusian landlady—I forget that woman's name—undertook to have properly prepared. The marriage ceremony was to be performed by a priest at a village about twelve English miles off, with whom Coralie undertook to communicate. 'I trust,' said that lady, 'to the honor of a British officer'—I had not then received my commission, but no matter—that he, that you, Captain Smith, will respect the sanctity of my concealment till we arrive in the presence of the reverend gentleman who,' she added, with a smile like a sunset, 'will, I trust, unite our destinies forever.' She placed, as she spoke, her charming little hand in mine, and I, you will hardly credit it, tumbled down on my knees, and vowed to religiously respect the dear angel's slightest wish! Mr. Tape, for mercy's sake, pass the wine, or the bare recollection will choke me!"

I must now, for the reasons previously stated, continue the narrative in my own words.

Every thing was speedily arranged for flight. Mr. Smith found no difficulty in procuring from the Spanish commandant an order which would enable him to pass his luggage through the barrier unsearched; Jeannette was punctual at the rendezvous, and pointed exultingly to a large chest, which she whispered contained the trembling Coralie. The chinks were sufficiently wide to admit of the requisite quantity of air; it locked inside, and when a kind of sailcloth was thrown loosely over it, there was nothing very unusual in its appearance. Tenderly, tremulously did the rejoicing lover assist the precious load into the hired bullock-cart, and off they started, Mr. Smith and Jeannette walking by the side of the richly-freighted vehicle.

Mr. Smith trod on air, but the cart, which had to be dragged over some of the worst roads in the world, mocked his impatience by its marvelously slow progress, and when they halted at noon to give the oxen water, they were still three good miles from their destination.

"Do you think?" said Mr. Smith, in a whisper to Jeannette, holding up a full pint flask, which he had just drawn from his pocket, and pointing toward the chest, "do you think?—Brandy and water—eh?"

Jeannette nodded, and the gallant Smith gently approached, tapped at the lid, and in a soft low whisper proffered the cordial. The lid was, with the slightest possible delay, just sufficiently raised to admit the flask, and instantly reclosed and locked. In about ten minutes the flask was returned as silently as it had been received. The enamored soldier raised it to his lips, made a profound inclination toward his concealed fiancée, and said, gently, "A votre santé, charmante Coralie!" The benignant and joyous expression of Mr. Smith's face, as he vainly elevated the angle of the flask in expectation of the anticipated draught, assumed an exceedingly puzzled and bewildered expression. He peered into the opaque tin vessel; pushed his little finger into its neck to remove the loose cork or other substance that impeded the genial flow; then shook it, and listened curiously for a splash or gurgle. Not a sound! Coralie had drained it to the last drop! Mr. Smith looked with comical earnestness at Jeannette, who burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

"Madame is thirsty," she said, as soon as she could catch sufficient breath: "it must be so hot in there."

"A full pint!" said the captain, still in blank astonishment, "and strong—very!"

The approach of the carter interrupted what he further might have had to say, and in a few minutes the journey was resumed. The captain fell into a reverie which was not broken till the cart again stopped. The chest was then glided gently to the ground: the driver, who had been previously paid, turned the heads of his team toward Badajoz, and with a brief salutation departed homeward.

Jeannette was stooping over the chest, con-

versing in a low tone with her mistress, and Captain Smith surveyed the position in which he found himself with some astonishment. No house, much less a church or village was visible, and not a human being was to be seen.

"Captain Smith," said Jeannette, approaching the puzzled warrior with some hesitation, "a slight contretemps has occurred. The friends who were to have met us here, and helped to convey our precious charge to a place of safety, are not, as you perceive, arrived: perhaps they do not think it prudent to venture quite so far."

"It is quite apparent they are not here," observed Mr. Smith; "but why not have proceeded in the cart?"

"What, captain! Betray your and madame's secret to yonder Spanish boor. How you talk!"

"Well, but my good girl, what is to be done? Will madame get out and walk?"

"Impossible—impossible!" ejaculated the amiable damsel. "We should be both recognized, dragged back to that hateful Badajoz, and madame would be shut up in a convent for life. It is but about a quarter of a mile," added Jeannette, in an insinuating, caressing tone, "and madame is not so very heavy."

"The devil!" exclaimed Mr. Smith, taken completely aback by this extraordinary proposal. "You can't mean that I should take that infernal chest upon my shoulders!"

"Mon Dieu! what else *can* be done?" replied Jeannette, with pathetic earnestness: "unless you are determined to sacrifice my dear mistress—she whom you pretended to so love—you hard-hearted, faithless man!"

Partially moved by the damsel's tearful vehemence, Mr. Smith reluctantly approached, and gently lifted one end of the chest, as an experiment.

"There are a great many valuables there besides madame," said Jeannette, in reply to the captain's look, "and silver coin is, you know, very heavy."

"Ah!" exclaimed the perplexed lover. "It is deucedly unfortunate—still—Don't you think," he added earnestly, after again essaying the weight of the precious burden, "that if madame were to wrap herself well up in this sail-cloth, we might reach your friend the priest's house without detection?"

"Oh, no—no—no!" rejoined the girl. "Mon Dieu! how can you think of exposing madame to such hazard?"

"How far do you say it is?" asked Captain Smith, after a rather sullen pause.

"Only just over the fields yonder—half-a-mile perhaps."

Mr. Smith still hesitated, but finally the tears and entreaties of the attendant, his regard for the lady and her fortune, the necessity of the position, in short, determined him to undertake the task. A belt was passed tightly round the chest, by means of which he could keep it on his back; and after several unsuccessful efforts, the charming load was fairly hoisted, and on

the captain manfully staggered, Jeannette bringing up the rear.

Valiantly did Mr. Smith, though perspiring in every pore of his body, and dry as a cartouch-box—for madame had emptied the only flask he had—toil on under a burden which seemed to grind his shoulder-blades to powder. He declares he must have lost a stone of flesh at least before, after numerous restings, he arrived, at the end of about an hour, at the door of a small house, which Jeannette announced to be the private residence of the priest. The door was quickly opened by a smart lad, who seemed to have been expecting them; the chest was deposited on the floor, and Jeannette instantly vanished. The lad, with considerate intelligence, handed Mr. Smith a draught of wine. It was scarcely swallowed when the key turned in the lock, the eager lover, greatly revived by the wine, sprang forward with extended arms, and received in his enthusiastic embrace—whom do you think?

“Coralie, half-stifed for want of air, and nearly dead with fright,” suggested Mr. Tape.

“That rascally Sous-lieutenant Victor! half-drunk with brandy-and-water,” roared Captain Smith, who had by this time worked himself into a state of great excitement. “At the same moment in ran Jeannette, and, I could hardly believe my eyes, that Jezebel Coralie, followed by half-a-dozen French voltigeurs, screaming with laughter! I saw I was done,” continued Mr. Smith, “but not for the moment precisely how, and but for his comrades, I should have settled old and new scores with Master Victor very quickly. As it was, they had some difficulty in getting him out of my clutches, for I was, as you may suppose, awfully savage. An hour or so afterward, when philosophy, a pipe, and some very capital wine—they were not bad fellows those voltigeurs—had exorcised their soothing influence, I was informed of the exact motives and particulars of the trick which had been played me. Coralie was Victor Dufour’s wife. He had been wounded at the assault of Badajoz, and successfully concealed in that Andalusian woman’s house; and as the best, perhaps only mode of saving him from a Spanish prison, or worse, the scheme, of which I had been the victim, was concocted. Had not Dufour wounded me, they would, I was assured, have thrown themselves upon my honor and generosity—which honor and generosity, by-the-by, would never have got Coralie’s husband upon my back, I’ll be sworn!”

“You will forgive us, mon cher capitaine?” said that lady, with one of her sweetest smiles, as she handed me a cup of wine. “In love and war, you know, every thing is fair.”

“A soldier, gentlemen, is not made of adamant. I was, I confess, softened; and by the time the party broke up, we were all the best friends in the world.”

“And so that fat, jolly looking Madame Dufour we saw in Paris, is the beautiful Coralie

that bewitched Captain Smith?” said Mr. Tape thoughtfully—“Well!”

“She was younger forty years ago, Mr. Tape, than when you saw her. Beautiful Coralies are rare, I fancy, at her present age, and very fortunately, too, in my opinion,” continued Captain Smith; “for what, I should like to know, would become of the peace and comfort of society, if a woman of sixty could bewitch a man as easily as she does at sixteen?”

#### THE CHAMPION.

##### A ROMANTIC INCIDENT IN EARLY SPANISH HISTORY.

**T**HE clang of arms and the inspiring sounds of martial music resounded through the courtyard of the palace of Navarre. The chivalry of Arragon, Castile, and Navarre had assembled at the summons of their sovereign, to fight under his banner against the infidels, and now waited impatiently for the moment when the monarch should mount his gallant steed, and lead them to battle and to victory.

Sancho the Fourth was at that moment bidding farewell to his queen, the gentle Dona Nuna, who clung to her lord in an agony of tears.

“Be comforted, my beloved,” he said to her; “I shall return to you with added laurels to my kingly wreath. Do not fear for me, nor let your sweet face grow pale by brooding over the dangers and chances of war. For my part, I never felt more exulting anticipations of success, and am persuaded that triumph and victory will crown our undertaking.”

“Alas! it is not so with me,” said Nuna, sadly. “A presentiment of approaching evil weighs heavily on my heart.”

“You shudder at the thought of our separation, Nuna, more like a timid young bride parting from her newly-wedded lord, than a matron who has shared her husband’s joys and sorrows for well-nigh twenty years.”

“You are now far dearer to me, Sancho, than when I gave you my hand: have I not to thank you for the love and tenderness which has made these long years of wedded life so blissful and happy?”

“In sooth, I believe, Nuna, it is even so: and you love me as warmly as ever. Receive my assurances in return, dear wife, that your face is as fair to me, and the gift of your true heart as fondly prized, as when I first led you to these halls, my youthful and beautiful bride. But suffer me to bid you farewell, or my nobles will wax impatient. I leave you to the society of our son, and the guardianship of my trusty Pedro Sésé, who will attend to your behests. One word more. I intrust to your safe keeping my beautiful steed, Ilderim. You know how I value the noble animal, my first capture from the Moor. See that he is carefully tended in my absence, I shall accept it as a proof of your regard for my wishes. And now, adieu, dearest wife. Think of me, and supplicate Heaven that I may be speedily and safely restored to your arms.”