



CAPTAIN PINK.

BY A. LANG.

I.

THE leaden light of a noon in early December hardly sufficed for Molly Vaughan's needlework, and for Kate Wogan's reading it seemed not to suffice at all. The two cousins were sitting by themselves in the library of the Castle, a long narrow room on the first floor; outside ran a railed gallery, above the old hall.

Molly was perched on a stool in the deep window niche; the stool she had set on a narrow platform, to which you climbed by five steps from the level of the library floor. The window, that overlooked the avenue, had been cut when James I. was king, out of the thickness of the wall of the gate-tower; and the gate-tower, under the Red William, had been built for the keep of a Norman settler on the wild Marches of Wales. The black Jacobean panelling of the library and the brown backs of the books on the shelves sucked up the pallid light. Molly, in the window, could see to stitch her scraps of a white silk petticoat into cockades; but Kate, it seemed, could not see to read the "Adventures of Pamela" that lay in her lap, and was new to her, Mr. Richardson having published his famous book in 1741, when Miss Wogan happened to be in France. The young lady, her hands clasped across her knees, was gazing into the fire of logs in the deep chimney-place. Now and again she shivered slightly: the day was bitterly cold.

Nevertheless the door of the library had been left half open, and, whenever the outer door of the hall below was opened to admit a visitor, the frosty wind brought up with it a gale of the strong tobacco which the assembled squires were moodily smoking. Always came the muffled sounds of men's voices—now low, now loud, and the grating of heavy oaken chairs as they were shifted on the stone floor of the hall,

beneath their anxious occupants. Any one could feel that something was going to happen, and that something not so pleasant to everybody as the drinking of toasts to the King over the water.

Molly, in the window recess, would pause from her work and listen, now and then, to the voices from the hall beneath, or would rise and look through the window behind her down the avenue. This she did whenever horses' hoofs clattered on the frozen road. Then she would watch the stranger who was welcomed at the door, and hearken while the voices in the hall rose louder and more eager, to die again in a kind of anxious disappointed hush.

"Nobody but a neighbour, of the Cycle Club*—Mr. Williams of the Barrow," said Molly, after one of these arrivals; and the snip of her scissors sounded again, as she trimmed and twisted odds and ends of white silk into a cockade.

Kate did not answer.

"The adventures of chaste Pamela do not seem to hold your attention, Kate," the sewing girl said again; adding, "I am not surprised: greater adventures than a waiting-maid's are at the doors. I wonder how you can keep so mum and still."

Her own voice was trembling with eagerness: her fingers were quivering as she snipped, or sewed in the gold thread which made the heart of her white roses. There are some of them still to be seen among the relics in old Welsh houses; the silk is darkened, and the tarnished gold has long lost its glitter. It is many a year since "Aunt Mary's roses" withered in a day.

"If you won't read, and despise fidgeting, Kate," said the sewing girl, who could neither be still nor silent, "at least you might work as I do. Oh, why can't I do more? How can the men sit smoking and prosing when they should rise and ride?"

"Whither should they be riding?" said

* A Welsh Jacobite society.

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Kate, picking up a dry twig from the hearth and tossing it on the flames.

"They might ride northward till they heard the guns," said Mary, flushing: "perhaps to-day they are fighting at Preston."

"They say the third time is lucky," said Kate; "I am sure I do not know. Preston has twice brought ill fortune to the Stuarts."

"And, Kate, you do not seem to care—you that have been in France, and had a kiss of the Prince's hand: you, a Wogan!"

"There are Wogans and Wogans," said the other girl listlessly. "We have had a regicide in our family, you know, as well as a Cavalier. We had Uncle Tom, as well as Uncle Ned."

She leaned forward and watched the flames again; she was lithe and tall, of the dark, brilliant type of the Irish.

The sewing girl rose and threw down a lapful of scraps of silk and golden thread. She came to her moody friend, knelt beside her, and coaxingly laid her brown head on the red silk that draped the dark girl's knees. "Dear Cousin Kate, what ails you? why are you so still and sad when the Prince may be within a short day's ride? Five years ago, when we were young, you were all on fire for the Cause."

"It is very cold to-day," muttered Mabel, shivering.

"Then you were with us, summer or winter, hot or cold."

The dark girl lowered her grey eyes to the other's kind face. "Molly, I am so silent because . . . because I have too much to say. Heart and soul! I have no heart in my body, except for you."

"I was afraid of that, Kate, ever since you came back from France," murmured Molly, her brown head buried on her cousin's breast. She was sorry, and she was curious. "Do you want to tell me, dear?" she whispered.

"Something in me seems to keep forcing me to tell you. Heart and soul! Molly, I learned many things in France besides French."

"You learned to draw, I know, and to play the spinet, and sing to charm 'fish out of the water, and water out of a stone,' and to ride better than any of us girls—oh, and to fence as well as Dick! Oh, Mabel, and the same man taught you all of these things! I understand, dear Mabel!"

"Yes," said Kate dreamily: "it was the old story. I learned my lesson from one who knew much though he was young. He taught me a world of things for little fee. Silver and gold had I none, but what I had I gave. So now, Molly, I have no heart; and Molly, they made me believe, in France, that we have no souls. Nothing is true that the priests have told us."

Molly jumped up and crossed herself. A Catholic of Wales, she knew little of the happy discoveries then recent and fashionable in France.

"Oh, hush, Kate!" cried Molly. "You are in a fever, you are hot and cold, you don't know what you speak! Some wicked man in France has said these words in your hearing. Let me bring Father Walsh to you: he is in the Oratory, praying for the Cause. He is a doctor, as well as a priest. Let me go"; for Kate had clasped her round the waist. Kate was the stronger by far, and held her firmly.

"No," she whispered—"let me confess to you, not to a priest."

What she confessed was bitter enough to hear—the new creed philosophical.

"Can men believe these things and live?" cried Molly.

"We call them *philosophes*," said Kate. "They live very merrily. How Monsieur Arouet used to make us laugh at the old Bible stories! Yes, all the ladies used to laugh! I was too happy, for one, to care for heaven or hell, death or judgment, true stories or fairy tales. And then there came another woman and took away my teacher, and did me a worse wrong, even, that I cannot tell you, Molly. Where my heart was, there is only the gnawing of pain and shame."

"Shame, Kate!"

"It was an unbearable wrong and wickedness. A man would have known what to do, but we are women. Am I to forgive? A saint would not have forgiven."

Kate hid her face in her hands and sobbed.

Molly also was puzzled and miserable. She did not want to know more. The silence grew: they could hear the great clock tick in the hall, for below the men were strangely quiet.

Kate lifted her hand without looking up, and the other girl caught it and laid it against her own cheek, which was wet.

"After all I had something left of my own," said Kate—"I had my secret. Now I have given it to you—the last thing that I had to give, except my love, that you had long ago. But you will keep my secret, won't you?"

"I shall keep it while I keep my love for you, and that is till I die, and after. And my love, and Dick's love, Kate, shall give you back your heart, and you will forget these wicked French lies, and Dick will right your wrong . . ."

"My wrong no man can right," muttered Kate, "and no woman may. Oh, it is not fair!"

Molly suddenly leaped to her window-seat, and looked down the road; as swiftly Kate was deep in "Pamela."

They had heard on the stairs the footfalls of a booted man. He entered, a young fellow—manifestly, by the resemblance of features and complexion, the brother of the girl in the window-seat.

"Molly is in her watch-tower," he said, "but I doubt she will see no more than Sister Anne did, in 'Bluebeard.'"

"Have you no news?" said Kate, looking up from her "Pamela."

"Nothing but reports: the Prince is within two days' march of Derby, with all Cheshire and Lancashire behind him, say some; or he has turned off to the Midlands to meet the Duke; or he is away northward again, as fast as the red shanks of his Highlanders can carry them. Every one has a different tale. Nothing certain: never a word for Sir Watkin and Wales! Was ever enterprise so ill guided? And here we sit . . ." he said, moodily flicking his boot with his riding-whip.

"We are more active," said Kate. "Here"—she stooped and took a white cockade from the heap—"is a badge for you, Cousin Dick. Wear it where it will be seen by the rebels—the Hanoverian's men,—or keep it till you may wear it at Court."

"I shall keep it while I live, Cousin Kate, as you wrought it; though I hope it may be black with powder before the week is out."

Kate did not disclaim having been the artificer of the silken knot; and Molly, who had turned round to speak, caught her glance and was silent.

There was no madness in Kate's manner now, but there was what Molly liked no better, and dreaded even more.

"I can be still nowhere, not even with

you, Kate," said Dick, rising to go; "and I do so reek of tobacco from the pipes of a dozen wavering squires that I am no fit company for ladies. Here comes another neighbour—with cross-news, or cross-questions. By the sound of the horse's hoofs he comes alone. But I must see him."

Dick leaped to the window-seat, where Molly was still gazing down the road. A single horseman on a weary grey turned the corner and came in view. "It is young Morgan of the Weld," said Dick, "as far as I can smoke him under his heavy riding-cloak. But I never saw his horse before. And, egad, if it is Morgan, he has more courage than all the rest. He is the only man of them that has ridden in wearing the white cockade. I wonder if he wore it all the way?"

He ran from the room, leaving the door open. Molly watched the horseman. Kate sat still; she had dropped her book again, and seemed listless as ever.

"It is not Tom Morgan," said Molly. "It is no one whom we know—indeed, we know no man half so handsome; and though, by the patch on his chin, he has cut himself in shaving. He is young, and looks very daring. Can it be a rider from the Prince, at last? Can it be—the Prince himself?"

She spoke to herself, not to Mabel. She ran out on to the gallery and stooped behind the railings that were draped with tapestry, whence she could see into the hall. There was a noise of welcoming the new-comer; out of many voices his came singularly clear and sweet, with an accent strange to the watching girl: it seemed to be French with a touch, for those who could recognise it, of the soft West Highland brogue. The words were of a broken English. The Prince, she knew, spoke English with the English accent; and, little as she had hoped, she felt a sinking of the heart. Molly crept back into the panelled room. Kate was crouched by the half-open door, her face averted. Molly looked strangely at her; the fancy entered her mind, would this voice be that of the man whom Kate called her teacher? Kate rose, went up to the window-seat, and gazed down the empty avenue, drumming with her fingers on the pane.

"From the voice," Kate said listlessly, "a stranger has come at last. He does not speak English or Welsh, whatever he

speaks. Run back to your eavesdropping, Molly; I am ashamed of mine."

Molly, without replying, flitted to her shelter behind the gallery railing, and Kate, noiselessly descending from the window-seat, crouched again in the shelter of the

n'entends pas. Have you *personne qui parle Français*—no French speaking?"

"Begad, he's right," cried the old Squire: "we shall never make him out at this rate. What English he has is Scotch, and what Welsh he has is Erse,



"The young lady, her hands clasped across her knees, was gazing into the fire of logs in the deep chimney-place."

open door, listening. Men were putting questions to the stranger, now in English, now in Welsh, to little purpose. A squire had just ended a Welsh sentence. The stranger spoke: "*Est-ce-que c'est le Gallois que j'écoute*,—would it be de Gaelic she would be? *Excuses, je*

as hard as Hebrew; but he rattles out French quick enough, if any of us knew it. There is Father Walsh, or—no, what a fool I am!—there is Kate: she patters parleyvoo like any Monsieur of the lot, damn them all. Dick, run upstairs and ask Kate to come down and interpret."

In a moment Molly was on her window-seat, Kate had retreated and ensconced herself in the armchair by the fire, and then Dick ran up and entered the room.

"The Prince has sent a messenger," he explained, "an officer in French service, who speaks no human language but French. I suppose he is of Scotch blood, born in France, and so he is safe as a prisoner of war if he is taken. They would hang any prisoner they could make out to be a British subject. But we can only understand one word out of five that he says, so the Squire asks you, Kate, to come down and translate him."

He took her hand. "Why, how cold you are! Your blood must have gone back to your heart," said Dick.

"It is at the Prince's service, wherever it may be," said Kate, blushing; while Molly liked her way less than ever.

"Well, the colour shows in your face now, that never I saw so pretty. This Captain Pink-o'-the-fashion in his French clothes looks coxcomb enough to believe you show your colour for *him*."

Dick turned and ran downstairs. Kate followed more slowly: she swiftly picked up a white cockade from the floor, and pinned it above her heart.

The stranger, his booted legs stretched out wearily, sat uncloaked in the hall—a shining presence among the plain squires, in his gay French clothes, unsoiled by war. But there were three little stains of blood on the lace band round his throat. Nothing else marred his elegance, and he fingered the patch where he had cut his chin. He seemed about Dick's age; but his eyes were as hard as they were handsome. Seeing Kate as she descended the last steps into the hall, he raised a silver cup and drank a long draught of claret. "*A la santé du Prince et de Mademoiselle!*" he said, and next moment was performing a deep French bow to Kate. She curtsied to the ground, stately, remote, and pale as snow.

The stranger, bowing, handed to Kate a letter which the company had already seen. It briefly bade Sir Arthur Vaughan trust the bearer, Captain Macdonald de Juvigny, and was signed "Charles P.R." The girl kissed the signature, and the stranger, smiling oddly, murmured words in French which sent the colour angrily back to her face, while her black brows contracted fiercely.

The words, which no man present understood, were: "Vous portez encore la rose blanche! Miracle de fidélité! On retrouve la belle brebis égarée!"

Kate's hand flew with a clutch to the white cockade above her heart.

To Dick, who was watching her, it seemed as if the girl only checked herself by an effort from wrenching the cockade from her bosom. A moment, Dick divined, and she would have torn off the emblem and tossed it in the Frenchman's face.

"What the devil has he said to Kate?" muttered Dick audibly; but his cousin was listening now with quiet attention, and a face blank of expression, while Captain Pink, as Dick called him, spoke rapidly and aloud, in French.

She began to interpret. "Monsieur Macdonald de Juvigny tells me that he has seen me in Paris, though I do not remember his face. He has just left my uncle, Colonel Nicholas Wogan, who is, I know, with his Royal Highness, and now rides to raise Wales for the Cause."

"Hurrah for old one-armed Nick!" cried Dick Davis.

De Juvigny spoke again.

"The gentleman says," Kate interpreted, while the Frenchman fingered the cut on his chin, "that his orders are to report to my uncle, Sir Arthur, alone. Sir Arthur will communicate what he is charged with to the rest of the gentlemen. He has news of importance."

"Orders must be obeyed, friends," remarked Sir Arthur. "You must excuse me for a quarter of an hour. Kate, lead Monsieur Macdonald—I can speak the first half of his name easiest—to the summer parlour. I'll follow as fast as my gout will let me. Faith, I scarce feel as if the saddle was the place for me this winter morning."

M. de Juvigny, one hand on his heart, swept a bow with his hat to the company. Kate led him out of the hall; he was whispering to her rapidly; she, with head erect, gave no sign that she heard him. Dick glared after them angrily.

The Squire hobbled after, very slow and lame, leaning a gouty red hand on tables as he passed. When the door at last closed behind him, Dick turned fiercely to a young man in the throng. "Was I so unfortunate," he asked, "as to hear Mr. Williams say that Sir Arthur's gout was mighty convenient?"

"Was mighty inconvenient, Mr. Vaughan, was what I took the freedom to observe. Does any gentleman here dissent from my expression of sympathy?"

"Sir, I beg your pardon for my mistake," said Dick, in the coldest of tones; and the company began to talk all at once and very loud to cover the incident. Dick sat down, silent, toying with his sword-hilt. Whatever the rest might feel, Dick was on fire to fight somebody—anybody, white cockade or black. That French coxcomb, he was sure, had been insulting his cousin.

When the side door was opening again, Dick sped from the hall by another way. He ran along a passage till he saw Kate's skirt turning the corner of a staircase, and followed her eagerly. He heard her sob.

"Kate, what is it? Tell me!"

"Bad news from Spain: our uncle Charles very ill," answered Kate, entering her room. Dick heard the bolt ring in the staple.

"That is a girl's lie," thought honest Dick to himself. "She never saw my uncle—none of us ever did. But my father had a letter from him, at La Mancha, later than any news that could have reached the Prince from Spain. How can I get even with that coward Captain Pink-o'-the-fashion? He is in my father's house. I cannot tread on his toe, or pick a quarrel over the cards. By George, I have a plan! Nobody will know that we have quarrelled, if this Captain Pink has the heart of a mouse."

Dick found his way to the library without crossing the hall. Molly was sitting by the fire; she had been crying.

"What possesses the women this day?" thought Dick; but what he said was, "Molly, where is the French dictionary?"

Molly went to a shelf and found it. "What do you want?" she asked.

"Something I have to ask of that French officer. He has said a word she does not like to Mabel. Go and see her—she is in her room."

"Dick, you won't quarrel?"

"In my father's house?" asked Dick. "Is it likely? But I want to understand. That is the way, my uncle Nick says, to avoid a misunderstanding. I am sure Mabel needs you."

Molly went off reluctantly. She knew that her brother could be obstinate.

Dick seized on the French dictionary,

and, not without labour, discovered some words that he wanted. Then he opened a drawer in a card-table, and took out a card—the ace of hearts. On this he wrote very distinctly the words which he had found, and threw the rest of the incomplete pack behind a bookcase. The card on which he had written he placed in a pocket in the breast of his coat. Then he sauntered down into the hall.

Horses were being brought to the door; guests with rather pale faces were taking the stirrup cup; others, five or six, were to stay for the night.

Sir Arthur beckoned Dick into a corner, where he sat beside a tankard. "Dick, you whelp, where have you been? I've sent the Mounseer to your room to unboot himself, and put his neat feet in a pair of your sprawling pumps, and to change his linen—though, faith, you have none fine enough for his wear."

"He is very welcome, sir. I am sorry I was away, but you came back to the hall before I expected you. May I ask his news?"

"We must rise and ride, those of us who can mount a horse," said the Squire, looking tenderly at his gouty foot. "I would rather be ordering my carriage to carry me to the Bath, but needs must when somebody drives. The Prince has spoken very candid and fair, I must say. If we can join him the day after to-morrow, or promise to join him the day after, he will make for London. If not, he cannot keep the faces of the Highland chiefs to the South for another day. The Cheshire gentry have flinched. Of Lancashire only a mob from Manchester has come in. He has hopes from his brother Henry, and the French, but no certain news. Barry has gone to my Lord Barrymore and Sir Watkin; French officers, like our Mounseer, are riding to warn all the Cycle Club."

The Squire had seldom told a tale so long and so plain: he told it mournfully, and comforted himself with flagons.

"We are all ready here, sir: do we ride to-night?" asked Dick.

"The others are not ready, except for a few near neighbours, who will dine and sleep here; the rest go home, and muster here to-morrow. Bring Molly to me in the blue study: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow—" The Squire sighed, and did not finish the text.

"Should I mount at once?" thought

Dick, as he went on his errand. "No, I must settle first with Captain Pink."

A troop of servants and gentlemen cantered down the avenue and away.

II.

Molly sat at the head of the table at dinner: beside her the French officer, very courtly and gallant. Molly had a little French, and she did her best to amuse him; her mind all the while was with Kate, who had refused to see her, and had sent to say that she was ill and must keep her room. Dick, watching closely, saw no touch of insolence in the Frenchman's words and looks—nothing more than the accustomed and honourable gallantry of the time. The squires drank deep enough to forget care; and Molly, when the dishes were removed, curtsied and left them to their wine. Dick moved up beside Monsieur de Juvigny; the usual loyal toasts were honoured: Dick doing his best, as he had scarce any French, to keep the visitor's glass full. But this was an easy task, for the officer never really emptied it, merely putting his lips to the wine.

"Father," said Dick, stepping to the Squire in his great chair, "we cannot well talk to our guest, but the cards speak a language that all gentlemen understand."

"Cards!" cried the Squire; and the servants, drawing up another table of green baize, brought clean glasses and a box holding several packs.

De Juvigny rose with alacrity, luging out a heavy purse and pouring a heap of louis d'or before him on the table. The others did likewise, and a huge bowl of punch was set down.

The night sped, amid shouts of laughter and oaths from the wild squires. More than one fell sound asleep amidst the din; others played eagerly—they had brought money for their expedition. Fortune went and came in varying tides: the gold crossed with the tides from place to place on the table. The hours ran by, unnoted; but the night had begun early, and by eleven o'clock Dick and the Frenchman were the only sober men in the room, the only men who, strictly speaking, could keep their feet if they rose. Two were under the table, vaguely quarrelling. De Juvigny smiled over a considerable heap of gold at the young man opposite, beside whom lay two or three pieces. The rest were cleared out.

Dick called the servants: they helped their defeated and half-unconscious masters away to bed. The gouty Squire, babbling hospitalities, was wheeled off in an arm-chair specially constructed for that purpose. One of the servants of the house handed a sealed note to Dick.

Bowing to De Juvigny for permission, he opened it, read it, thrust it in his pocket, and murmured a word to the man, who left the room. Then, with the sweetest of smiles, Dick took up two of the candlesticks, and, again bowing to De Juvigny, waved his hand, and moved towards the door.

"*Dormes, dormes, chers amours,*" hummed Dick, laughing. He had no French, but the words came in a song that Kate used to sing.

The Frenchman laughed back: he rather liked this intelligent young barbarian. He crammed the captive gold into his wide pockets. A dozen pieces slipped from his fingers and rolled on the carpet. De Juvigny looked at the servants, and pointed to the floor with a gesture of permission. The men, who had been gazing with greedy eyes at so great a treasure, glanced at Dick, and when he smiled, began to hunt for the fallen pieces, whispering eagerly in Welsh. But one was watching the movements of the Frenchman.

De Juvigny laid his hand affectionately on the lad's shoulder, as if to steady himself, and followed his candle-bearer. Dick led him to his room, bowed to him to enter first, and surveyed all with the attentive eye of the host. The bed lay white and inviting; the fire flickered a lullaby; a pile of letters, one unfinished, was heaped on the bureau: all was well.

Then Dick, setting down one candle on a table by the bed, lit from the flame of the other an illumination through the room, on walls, chimneypiece, and dressing-table. Last, he drew his card from his pocket and, bowing, handed it to the Frenchman, who read—

"*Vous insultez une femme. Vous êtes un lâche.*"

The Frenchman read, and smiled. "*L'Amour n'est pas si aveugle!*" he murmured to himself. Then, taking from his fob a watch that burned with diamonds, he placed his white ringed finger at a figure on the dial.

Dick looked at the figure indicated, smiled, bowed again, profoundly, and lit



"Seeing Kate as she descended the last steps into the hall, he raised a silver cup and drank a long draught of claret. 'A la santé du Prince et de Mademoiselle.'"

his way, with his one candle, through the long black corridors, to his own room.

"Clever of him to give me the hour of meeting in that way," said Dick aloud to

himself. "If one did not know better, one might think the brute a gentleman."

A door was open: the dim light from a low fire within showed a woman's figure

in the doorway. Kate stood there, and beckoned to Dick to enter.

He hesitated.

"Come: you must come!" she whispered imperiously.

Dick looked right and left: there was no light and no sound in the corridor—the house was wondrous still. He entered; Kate softly closed the door, and stood with her back against it.

"Dick, I was watching and listening: I heard what you said to yourself."

Her face, in her fallen black hair, was white, her eyes shining in the light of the candle which was in Dick's hand.

His hand trembled. "I am sorry that you heard," said he.

"Dick, dear Dick, you must not do what you intend. You must not meet that man. It will harm the Cause."

"Your honour, our honour, come before the Cause. He insulted you under our roof. We two quarrelled over the cards when the rest had gone: it is easily explained. Good-night." He tried to pass her.

She stood firm. "Dick, you cannot fight! If you fall by his sword, your memory will be a mockery while men remember. If he falls by your sword, your honour is lost for ever."

"I don't know what you mean, but I can take care of my honour," said Dick. "Kate," he went on, "you know what you are to me: to you I am Molly's brother. This is not a matter for women's meddling."

Kate paused one moment; then her face altered. She looked as Dick had never thought to see her look. Her eyes fell; then, as she raised them to his face, they softened and glowed. "What you are to me? Oh, Dick, don't you know? You are everything."

She caught him in a wild embrace, she laid her cheek against his; then, with a little low laughter, she blew out the candle.

In that moment Dick's love for Kate Wogan fell dead. He was very young, very inexperienced, but he was certain that love for him was not in her heart. Was she playing this strange part for the first time? He shook in her embrace, but he undid her arms from his neck. "I am very sorry," he said, with a kind of sob. "But your honour is mine."

He moved her from her place, he went forth, shutting the door very carefully.

He groped his way down the corridor for six paces; then he stood and listened, while he took off his shoes. All was deathly still. When perfectly assured that no one was stirring, he went stealthily to his room, feeling his way by the walls of the corridors. His door was open, the firelight shone out from it. He entered, locked his door, and threw himself, face down, on his bed.

Molly, awakened in the deep of the night, heard the clatter of horses' hoofs galloping down the way from the stables—the hoofs of two horses, she thought. She drew her repeater from below her pillow, and pressed the spring. There was no tinkle of the tiny silver bells. She had forgotten to wind her watch, and it had run down. She dared not go from her room to consult a clock; Kate's door, she knew, was bolted—no help there.

The girl tossed and turned, tormented by many thoughts, and unwittingly at last fell asleep. The early sounds of folk astir in the castle before the dawn did not arouse her. When she awoke it was in the yellow light and among the dancing shadows of a candle held in an old woman's trembling hand.

"Nurse, Winifred, what is it? why so early?" cried the girl. Then she went on: "Oh, I remember—they ride to-day. The Saints give me courage, and to them safety, and to the Prince victory," she murmured, sitting up and crossing herself.

The old woman fell into a chair by the bed, moaning, and rocking her body to and fro.

"Courage, dear old Winnie!" said the girl, in Welsh. "We must be brave to-day, till they have ridden."

"One will never ride out," said the old woman, with the pleasure old women take in "breaking the news."

"Who? Is it Dick? is it my father?" cried the girl, leaping from bed.

"Master Dick is fown, his grey gelding and the big brown horse, Rupert, are gone from the stables, and the Squire is but now come out of his fit, and crying like a child over the honour of the house."

"Oh, do speak: what honour? Is any one dead?" Molly shook the old woman. "Speak! speak!" she said. She could not believe that Dick had fled from the enterprise of the day, and that this news had smitten his father. That could not be. But she had heard the horses' feet that bore her brother through the night.

"The French officer is dead," the old woman answered.

"How?" screamed Molly, trying to dress with hands numb and trembling.

"Mat, the Squire's man, was up by six; most of the household were up. He had orders to call the French officer, and as he walked along the yellow gallery, he saw a great light that streamed from his open chamber door. And there, fallen across the bed, in shirt and drawers, was the Frenchman, a sword-thrust in his side, and another had grazed his ribs. His own sword, drawn, lay on the floor: and a table had fallen, and golden coins were glittering all over the carpet; and every candle in the room was lit, as if it had been for a ball. Mat ran for me; for I know about treating sword-wounds—many a one have I tended when the Squire was young and the gentlemen would quarrel over their cards. I was up and stirring when Mat came to me, and he took me to the room. I put my hand on the Frenchman's heart: he was hardly cold, but never a flutter of the heart. Miss Molly," said the old nurse, dropping her voice to a low whisper in the girl's ear, "*the Frenchman was a woman!*"

Peal upon peal of the cruel agony of laughter that seems as if it would never cease rang from Molly's lips. She fell back on her bed, mastered by the mad mirth that possessed and tormented her—a laughing devil that for long would not go out, despite all the old wife's arts of rousing and soothing.

The skirts of frightened women came fluttering to the door, maids drawn by the frightful laughter. The old woman bade them leave her fostering to her. Kate entered on tiptoe, pale and cool, and whispered with Winifred.

"Tell her, when you can, that her father is himself again," Kate said, and passed to her own adjacent room.

The dawn was grey in the chamber before Molly's shaking head was still and her wild lips were silent.

"Now I may bring you a cup of chocolate, dear," said the nurse.

Life was come into the room again, and common things and memory returned. Molly lay and thought; escaped from the mad mockery of the strange event. Her brother had been angry with the Frenchman, she reflected. They had fought a duel, no doubt, by candle-light, without witnesses; it was nothing so very

unusual in these days. After the fatal sword-thrust Dick had found that his enemy was a woman. Many ladies rode all the way with the Prince's troops: some, the English believed, rode in male attire, and armed, like Jenny Cameron. The horror of the discovery had driven Dick to fly—whither? Perhaps to give himself up to the justice of his rightful Prince.

So Molly reasoned with herself, languidly, when her eyes fell on a card, the ace of hearts, that lay on a table beside her pillow. There was writing along the length of the card. She looked at it more closely; the writing was in Dick's hand.

"*Vous insultez une femme. Vous êtes un lâche.*"

Then Molly knew: her guess was now a proved fact; there lay the challenge.

The old nurse opened the door.

"What is this card, Winnie? how came it here?" Molly asked, with a desperate calmness.

"I found it on the Frenchwoman's table, and brought it to show you, before you had your bad turn."

Molly thrust the card into the bosom of her bedgown. She would destroy it when she had the chance. "What do they say downstairs, Winnie?" she asked.

"The gentlemen all rode away when they heard the news. They said that Stewart of Glenbucky was pistoled in his bed in Armprior's house—it is not known by whom—as he went to join the Prince, and that now this Frenchwoman has been killed here strangely; and so they say that there is a curse on the Cause."

"Cowards!" said Molly. "And what do our own people think?"

"The serving-men said at first, dearie, that the stranger and Master Dick were the only two gentlemen in the house who could stand on their feet last night, and that Master Dick was flown. So they thought that these two, playing alone at the cards, must have quarrelled and fought. It was when the Squire heard *that*, that he swooned away; but Father Walsh bled him, and he came to again. And then they wakened David Price, the stable-boy, that had slept through all the morning noise in his loft; and he showed a written line that Master Dick had left with him for the Squire, when he saddled the horses. It was no more than "I will be back again before nine," and that

comforted the Squire. For Master Dick, if he had fought with a lady, not knowing, and unhappily had killed her and ridden off, would not be riding back in the morning, to be sure. And back he will come; Master Dick never lied in his life."

"Thank the Saints," said Molly. Dick would answer for himself. Dick was guiltless.

"And now," said Winifred, "the men do not know what to think, and each is suspecting the other, for they quarrelled last night over some gold that the Frenchwoman let fall on the floor and told them to scramble for. And her window was found open, and marks of blood on the carpet, as if some one had stepped on tiptoe out of the pool of blood to the window, and let himself down by a sheet that is fastened to a table and hanging out of the window."

"Are there footmarks on the ground below?" asked Molly.

"There could not be—the ground is frozen as hard as steel. Father Walsh guesses that some one attacked the Mounseer in the night for the money, and that he—I mean she—defended herself, and that the thief was somebody in the house, a serving-man, who had knotted the sheet to the table to escape by. But something must have disturbed him, and he had not time to pick up the gold, but probably got back into the castle by a way that the young men use when they go courting."

"But a thief would not light all the candles," said Molly.

"No; but Father Walsh thinks that the Frenchwoman had lit them, and sat up writing letters. Many letters lay on her table—Father Walsh burned them all—and one was unfinished. The Father told me, that I might tell you; he has known me for forty years, the blessed man. It is all to show you that Master Dick did not do it. He was never the one for mean tricks like these."

"Never Dick!" said Molly, pondering over the theory of the Jesuit. It seemed to meet all the circumstances. A greedy servant, probably the servant of one of the neighbours in the house, had seen the pile of gold; had hoped to seize it in the night, and escape in the confusion of the times. He could easily find a sword—nay, probably was armed, to ride with his master to the war. He had unexpectedly found the Prince's messenger up and

awake, writing. They had fought, and the man had killed the woman, whom he took for a man. He had then been disturbed, probably by the noise of Dick moving through the house before he rode away, and had preferred to escape by the window, and then re-enter the house, rather than risk being found in the passages. It appeared the only solution of the mystery.

But why had Dick ridden away? and why with two horses?

"What o'clock is it, Winnie?" Molly asked.

"It was near nine, dear, when I passed the great clock on the stairs."

"Help me to dress," said Molly; and being dressed, she drank her chocolate, and ran along the gallery to her old perch in the window-seat of the library. She had not long to wait. Again there came the longed-for sound of two horses galloping up the avenue. The girl fled down to the hall, passing one or two frightened men-servants, already somewhat bemused with beer. Along the avenue she flitted, bare-headed; she was past the corner, was alone beneath the trees. The trample of the hoofs came nearer; she stooped and hid among the low shrubs and hollies beside the road. Two horsemen came in sight, galloping: the foremost, who rode the grey, was Dick Vaughan; the huge one-armed man on brown Rupert could be none but Molly's uncle, whom she had never seen. Kate's uncle, too—the half-mythic hero of the family, the daring jolly Irish Chevalier Nicholas Wogan.

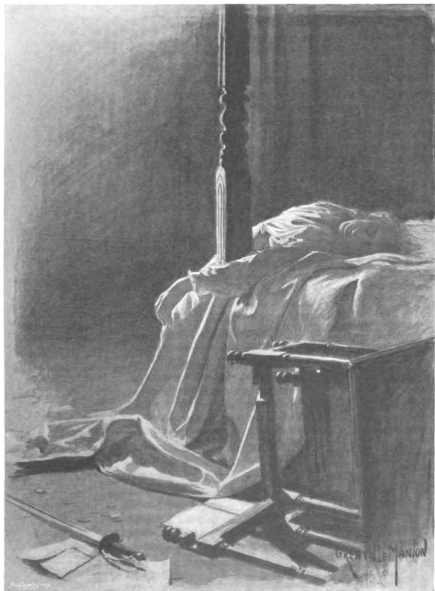
Through thirty years--all Europe knew it—Nick had fought for the Cause, by land and sea. A lad of fifteen, he had shown the steady courage of a veteran at Preston. A veteran of forty-five, he had displayed the fighting fury of a lad, at Fontenoy, with the conquering Irish brigade.

The girl leaped up from her hiding-place, stood in the centre of the avenue, and stretched out her arms as a signal to the riders to stop.

The men checked their steaming horses.

"Oh, Dick, stop, stop!" the girl cried. "Do not go to the house; I must speak to you first alone!"

"Not without your uncle, Miss Molly. You must be niece Molly!" quoth Nicholas Wogan, leaping down from the



And there, fallen across the bed, in shirt and drawers, was the Frenchman, a sword-thrust in his side and another had grazed his ribs."

saddle. His one arm was round her in a moment.

"Turn, and walk beside me away from the house," said Molly, as her uncle kissed her.

Dick looked at his watch. "Five minutes to nine, Uncle Nicholas," said he.

"Never mind, Dick: 'tis for once a fair occasion to be late at a tryst with a lady.

Think of it, Molly," cried the Chevalier, letting a great laugh out of him; "your brother rode in the night to bring me a beast that could carry a man of my inches; my nag had broken down at an inn twelve miles away, and I sent a lad on a country pony, late last night, to bid Dick come with a remount."

He patted Rupert's neck. "So your brother's first word to his long-lost uncle

was—what do you think?—was to ask me to second him in a duel this morning! It is myself that always was a peacemaker, and glad I was to be of use so soon in my own family."

"But who is your man?" says I to Dick; "and what is the quarrel? Not that it matters much between gentlemen."

"Says Dick to me, 'He insulted my cousin Kate.'

"Says I, 'I have fought more than once on that head, when I was with the Army in Flanders. Some enemy my niece has, and I was compelled to silence lying tales that came to us from Versailles—tales that we cannot tell niece Molly. But your man?' I asked again.

"Says Dick, 'A Scotch French officer—the Prince's messenger, Monsieur Macdonald de Juvigny.'

"Lord, niece, at that I lay back in my chair in the *auberge*, and laughed till the chair was killed under me. When I had dug myself out of the ruins, 'Dick,' says I, 'your man's a woman! She came over in the same barque as myself, with d'Eguilles. I knew it, knew what she was, by a chance, and one other knows it; but in the camp there is never a whisper of it. The cunning wench cuts the man well, and now and again acts her chin with a razor, as if she had shaved badly in a hurry, *comme à la guerre*.'"

Nicholas laughed again, till the bare woods rang, and rubbed his own black-bristled chin. He ran on. "But, Dick, you took a risk when you challenged my lady. I have seen her use the foils; she might have been fencer to the Sophy, like the lady in Shakespeare's play," and he laughed once more.

Dick did not laugh.

"Let's back and to breakfast," said Nicholas. "I daresay the wench no more insulted your cousin, you fire-eater, than she had a right to the breeches."

Molly stopped, fronted her uncle, and held up her hand. "Oh, uncle, for the sake of charity do not laugh. She, that woman in man's dress, is lying dead in the red room; a sword-thrust through her heart, her own sword bare beside her. Every candle in the room was left lighted: it shone brighter than the day. Gold won at cards was scattered all over the floor. She fell in a fight. My God! with whom?"

Dick staggered; his face was deadly white.

Nick Wogan's broad brown face could not pale, but his jaw drooped. "The honour of the house—the honour of the old house! A woman slain in the house!" he gasped, and leaned against his horse's side, as if a bullet had struck him.

There was silence. Dick said no word; he was trembling,

"Molly, it cannot be," said Nick at last. "I see it all. He, the woman I would say, had won all the gold in the house, all our friends' gold, at cards. A servant has killed her for the money—killed her in her sleep, and left the candles all alight, and her own sword drawn beside her, to give the appearance of a duel. Oh, damn the infernal villain!"

Dick Vaughan groaned.

"That is just what Father Walsh guessed," said Molly, "or something very like that. He thinks that the French-woman was writing, late in the night; that she attacked the thief, who had a sword; that the thief killed her, but was disturbed, perhaps by the noise Dick made when he went out to the stables. Then the thief let himself out of the window by a sheet, and came back into the house by a way which, Winnie says, the servants sometimes use."

"That's it!" cried Nicholas. "Dick, we must find the fellow. Well guessed, the Jesuit! Cheer up, Dick: it is better, black as it is, now we know the secret of it. Why, man, you look as if you had seen a ghost. I don't wonder: you might have fought a woman, though she was a man's match with the foils."

Dick turned a white face on his uncle. "It must be so—you are right," he said; and between his teeth he muttered, "unless——"

"Unless what, you *omudhaun*?" thundered Nicholas.

There was a rustling of dry beech-leaves and a snapping of twigs in the shrubbery.

"My uncle Nicholas is welcome," came in Kate's voice. She had stolen on them through the underwood. She was in riding-habit as if for a journey, her right hand was thrust into the breast of her coat. She went on: "This is, perhaps, no safe place for confidences. The servants are talking about the sound of horses' hoofs that came so near and strangely died away. Some speak of the omen of

the phantom coach; but bolder spirits are heartening themselves to walk down the avenue and investigate. Let us hurry on. It were a pity if the horses caught cold."

"Niece Kate," said Nicholas, "I have heard of you often, but never seen you. You are the best man of us. Let us jog." He walked in advance, his arm round Molly's trembling waist; she led Rupert.

Dick followed, Kate beside him, speaking low. "Dick," she said, "I have listened for some minutes. I seem to have got a habit of listening, in these late times. You said 'unless!' But Molly guesses nothing, does she?"

Dick looked at her. His tongue was dry; he could hardly utter the words, "It was so, then?"

"It was so—in fair fight," said Mabel. She bared her right forearm. There was blood on a bandage above the wrist. "My *maître d'armes* taught me to use the left hand," she said, "or I had not been here. We fought *à outrance*. We had the same master, in France. I knew that we were of equal force. You guessed, I think, when our sonorous uncle said, 'She is a man's match with the foils.' You knew that I was."

"I guessed sooner," said Dick. "Why was this done?"

"Could I leave it to you? You now know why I could not. I do not love you, Dick," said Kate, her white face angrily flushed. She hid her face with her hands. "I could not leave this to you, this shame to the house. I would have taken shame on myself; it was a choice of shames, and I was mad, and I was shamed by you. By that woman I would not again be shamed. I hated her to the death, and she me. She knew I was here, and came to ruin me. In France she did me the greatest wrong that one woman can do another. I endured it. Then she gave out, Dick, lies against me; said that I was a spy on the Prince. The lies were believed. She was the granddaughter of that Macdonald called 'The Tailor,' who dealt with Stair when the King was young. Poison was in her blood. She was believed. I had to leave France. In this house she insulted me."

"I knew it," said Dick.

Kate went on: "She threatened to tell her old lies, and new lies, to my uncle and all the gentlemen, to-day. Your

Cause has been betrayed; she learned it on her way hither. The Scots are running home. And she told me that she would denounce me as the traitress, the informer. She had a great protector, who would have believed her story. Could I let her speak? If my hand might help me, could I let her live? You could not stop her in *your* way; no man could meet her, in a man's way, and no man knew that. I sat and thought, when you left me. How could I make good my story? How could I live, if she lived to tell hers? You might have stopped her, if I had left you free, but shame would have fallen on you—to have slain a woman,—dishonour among men. To save you from that, if I could, I did a great wrong, a bitter wrong, to you and to myself, Dick. We can never meet again. Do you forgive me? I may say good-bye to Molly? I shall never see her more."

Dick could not speak. He held out his hand, and she kissed it.

"Now let us join the rest," said Kate. "I am quite safe in life, and"—she said with a strange smile—"in honour. The Jesuit's guess will be believed. I arranged the sheet at the window, when all was done, to that very end. But no man will suffer for me; if any man is in danger I shall tell all. I go to-day to my people in Essex."

"They are bitter Protestants," said Dick.

"The better for me. Protestants do not confess, and you have heard my last confession. Let us go in."

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Little moan was made, and no inquest was held on the body of a Jacobite officer, dying where it was no man's interest to proclaim that he had been. In the old castle they still speak of the mysterious "Captain Pink," as they call him. They tell you how gallantly attired he came to the house, how he won the gold of his hosts at cards, how, next morning, he was found strangely slain, and how, mystery of mysteries, Captain Pink was a woman. They show you the room in which she lay—no one has lain there since—and the stained mattress on which she died. But even the date of these events has been forgotten by tradition, which still guesses vaguely at the problem of the slaying of Captain Pink.