

A Survival of Chivalry

BY HENRY S. WATSON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

TWICE before I had been roused from a waking nap by the blare of bugles, and had turned out to see the passing of a battalion of French provincial troops. Soldiers anywhere are well worth a little sleep, even the last forty winks of a summer morning, and these troops that marched through the high street of Poissy had a happy way of passing from the shadows beneath my balcony out upon the bridge beyond, where the slant of the early sun struck yellow diamonds from the burnished metals of war. But this morning the rattle of music heralded a file of a dozen men clad in white duck suits, half of them wearing red hats and sashes, half of them wearing blue, while four of them blew upon bugles with the vim and spirit a Frenchman puts into a martial tune. The eight without bugles carried lances of the true mediæval pattern, with this not unimportant difference, that the points and the butts were padded after the manner of a fencing-foil, with pads of the size of a boxing-glove.

It was the time of the fête, and the road in the appointed quarter was lined with dozens of booths, where all the delights of the American side-show were offered for a season to the people of the town and of the country round about. Any one who knows provincial life in France knows how the fête passes from

place to place at this season after the manner of a circus; but it is only where a sheet of water is handy that one can see this shred of mediæval splendor, the *joute à la lance*.

Others besides myself had been roused to view the passing tilters—in France it is never too early to be amused—and showers of coppers, with a good sprinkling of silver pieces, fell at the feet of the modern knights. “Sturdy beggars!” you will say. Not at all. To the Gallic mind the so-called ethics of amateur sport are undreamed-of; and the fact that the prizes of the water tourney are in money should not lead one to conclude that the contest had any taint of what we choose to regard as professionalism. There are three prizes for the all-comers event, and one for home talent. The competing lancemen all pay an entrance fee of three or four francs to the town authorities, for the fêtes have a strictly municipal character; and as there are many extra expenses in connection with the *joute à la lance*, the competitors march through the town soliciting contributions from the shopkeepers and other citizens who profit by the popularity of the fête. The receipts are handed over to an official, and if they exceed the net expenses of the occasion, the excess is credited to the general profits of the fête. If they fall short



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of it, the difference is made up from the general treasury. And so the contestants strictly qualify as amateurs, or would do so if the term were known among them.

The lists were marked out on the Seine by buoyed ropes, two or three hundred yards long and one hundred and fifty yards apart. In the centre of one of the sides was anchored a barge—the umpire's stand; behind was a raft, on which were the dressing-room of the contestants and the omnipresent band. The whole was brilliant with bunting, and it radiated laughter, hot argument, and nerve-crashing music. The banks were crowded with spectators, and hundreds of small craft lined up along the ropes, quite as at Henley the punts, dinghies, and wherries line up along the course while a race is on. But none of your English aristocracy here! It is the land of liberty, equality, and fraternity—at least as far as its amusements are concerned. Huge and cumbersome bateaux jostled the lightest and daintiest craft; while on the bank high-heeled

boots tramped side by side with sabots, and a poppy-bed of Parisian bonnets had for centre the white coiffure of a peasant. But to the sport!

Two boats detached themselves from the jumble about the umpire's barge and moved towards the opposite ends of the lists. Each was rowed by two sturdy oarsmen, and in the stern of each was a raised platform on which one of my early-morning warriors stood statuesquely resting on his padded lance, with a huge pad on his chest, which bore the same relation to a fencer's brisket that the lance bore to a foil. One of the contestants was from the side distinguished by the red cap and sash, one from the blues. At the ends of the tilting space the boats swung around and faced. The rival lancemen gravely saluted, and the bugles in the bunting-covered scow rattled out a military charge. The boats bounded forward, and an expectant hum went up from the surrounding crowds. The rival bows approached each other at full speed, passing as near as possible, the oarsmen straining every nerve. The



HUNDREDS OF SMALL CRAFT ALONG THE ROPES

lancemen made a few graceful passes in the air to limber their muscles, balancing their lithe bodies to a nicety, each on his small square platform. One hand was thrown backward in the true fencing attitude; the other held the lance, the padded butt of which was firm against the hip. The bows crossed. There was a rattling of wooden shafts. He of the blue cap tottered and bent as the boats drew apart. Perhaps you thought he was on the point of being thrust into the water. Look again! He has taken a few jig steps, and is now leaning statu-

esquely upon his lance. Clearly, if you have concluded that he got the worst of the passage, it was not his fault.

The boats withdrew to the opposite ends, swung about, and with another fierce blast bore down upon each other. Again the crash of lances. Again he of the blue cap tottered; but there was no jig step now, no calm pose upon the upright weapon. The hands were thrown wildly upward, casting the lance upon the water. For an instant a white figure hung in mid-air, and then disappeared in a surging of white foam. An English

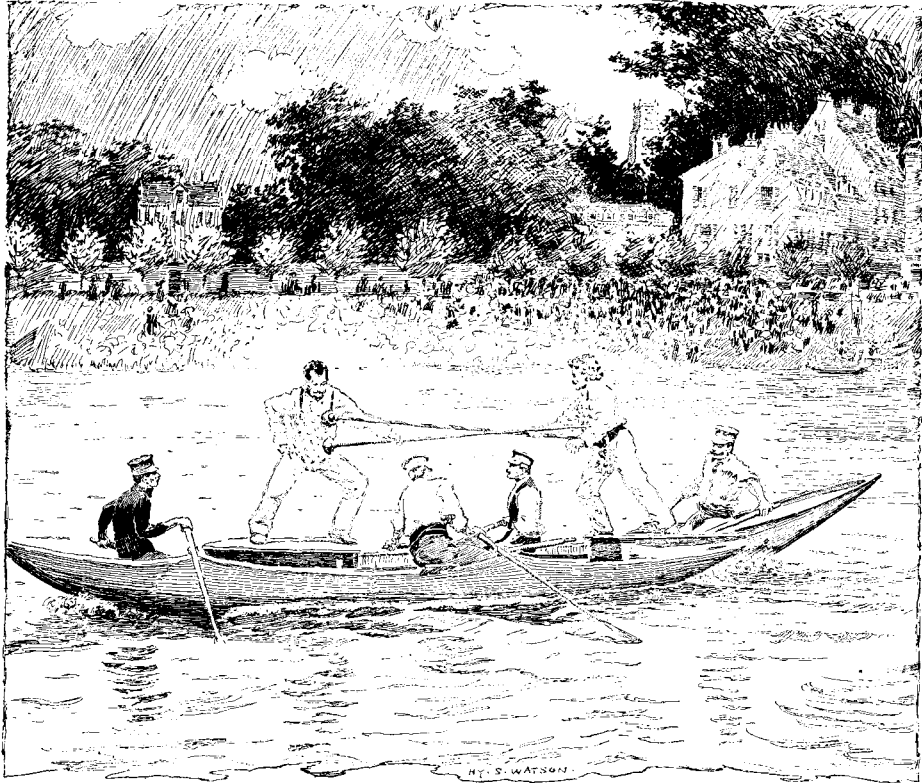
traveller over there let off a huge guffaw, which showed clearly his idea of sport and sportsmanship. The Frenchmen sent up a roar of congratulation to the victor upon this drawing of first blood, while a small yacht's tender put out from the barge and picked up the vanquished unnoticed.

On the second bout the two knights were more evenly matched, and the passage at arms more stubbornly and skillfully contested. Once, twice, thrice, they flourished and clashed their lances, and, still firm on their feet, swept on to

the opposite boundaries of the lists, where they turned to renew the encounter. Silently but steadily the enthusiasm of the audience waxed warmer. Five, six, seven, bouts passed. It was not until the eighth that one of the warriors toppled and fell amid a roar that drowned out the noise of his splashing. No need now of the tender! Resolute even in defeat, he struck out for the barge with his own strong arms, to the evident admiration of the onlookers. The courteous French have no word for what the self-conscious Anglo-Saxon calls grand-stand play.



ON THE BANK TRAMPED SABOTS



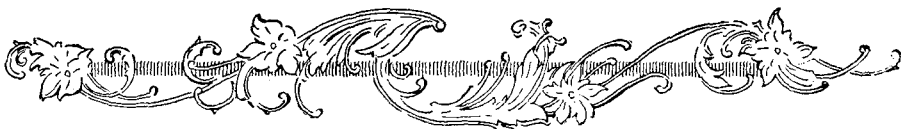
AGAIN THE CRASH OF LANCES

When the victors of the preliminary bouts faced each other they held their lances at rest in their left hands, and in the right a glass brimming with the red wine of the country. No bugle sounded a charge. Every one was silent in the solemnity of the occasion. As they passed, their glasses clinked, and they quaffed the wine, with what seemed a true mediæval thirst, to the toast that the best man win. Then great deeds were done; and once so fierce was the onslaught that both of the mighty opposites were hurled into the water together, amid the acclamations of the spectators; and so the sport went on, bout by bout.

The final duel of the day was between

the winner of the contest of the afternoon and the champion of the last previous fête in the circuit. Alas for the brevity of human fame! The champion was hurled headlong.

That night, in the diminutive garden beneath my window in the little inn, mine host and one of the oarsmen—a hero too in his way—fought again the battles of the day over a bottle of the red wine of the country. As I drifted into oblivion I heard the clinking of glasses, and as the wine flowed, the red argument of the country resounded in my ears: "*Magnifique! C'est moi qui le dit, c'était magnifique, cà! Mais oui, magnifique!*"



A Philanthropist

BY JOSEPHINE DODGE DASKAM

"I SUSPECTED him from the first," said Miss Gould, with some irritation, to her lodger. She spoke with irritation because of the amused smile of the lodger. He bowed with the grace that characterized all his lazy movements. "He looked very much like that Tom Waters that I had at the Reformed Drunkards' League last year. I even thought he was Tom—"

"I do not know Tom?" hazarded the lodger.

"No. I don't know whether I ever mentioned him to you. He came twice to the League, and we were really quite hopeful about him, and the third time he asked to have the meeting at his house. We thought it a good sign—the best of signs, in fact. So as a great favor we went there instead of meeting at the rooms. I was a little late—I lost the way—and when I got there I heard a great noise, as if they were singing different songs at the same time. I hurried in to lead them—they get so mixed in the singing—and—it makes me blush now to think of it—the wretch had invited them all early, and—and they were all intoxicated! I am sorry I told you," she added, with dignity, for the lodger, in an endeavor to smile sympathetically, had lost his way, and was convulsed with a mirth entirely unregretful.

"Not at all, not at all," he murmured, politely; "it is a delightful story. I would not have missed it—a choir of Reformed Drunkards! But do you not perceive in these little set-backs a warning against further attempts? Do you still attend the League? It is not possible?"

"Possible?" echoed his visitor,—for, owing to certain recent and untoward circumstances, Miss Gould was half reclining in her lodger's great Indian chair, sipping a glass of his '49 port. "Indeed I do! They had every one of them to be reformed all over again! It was most disgraceful!"

Her lodger checked a rising smile and leaned solicitously toward her, regarding her firm, fine-featured face with flattering attention. "Are you growing stronger? Can I bring you anything?" he inquired.

Miss Gould's color rose, half with anger at her weakness of body, half with a vexed consciousness of his amusement. "Thank you, no," she returned, coldly. "I am ashamed to have been so weak-minded. I must go now and tell Henry to pile the wood again in the east corner. There will probably come another tramp very soon—they are very prevalent this month, I hear."

Her lodger left his low wicker seat—a proof of enormous excitement—and frowned at her. "Do you seriously mean, Miss Gould, that you are going to run the risk of another such—such catastrophe? It is absurd. I cannot believe it of you! Is there no other way—"

But he had been standing a long while, it occurred to him, and he retired to the chair again. A splinter of wood on his immaculate white flannel coat caught his eye, and a slow smile spread over his handsome, lazy face. It grew and grew until at last a distinct chuckle penetrated to the dusky corner where the Indian chair leaned back against dull Oriental draperies. Its occupant attempted to rise, her face stern, her mouth unrelenting. He was at her side instantly.

"Take my arm—and pardon me!" he said, with an irresistible grace. "It is only my fear for your comfort, you know, Miss Gould. I cannot bear that you should be at the mercy of every drunken fellow that wishes to impose on you!"

As she crossed the hall that separated her territory from his, her fine, full figure erect, her dark head high in the air, a whimsical regret came over him that they were not younger and more foolish.