

Author of "In the Midst of Alarms," "The Mutable Many," etc.



VERY fortress has one traitor within its walls; the Schloss Eltz had two. In this, curiously enough, lay its salvation; for as some Eastern poisons when mixed neutralize each other and form combined a harmless fluid, so did the two traitors unwittingly counteract, the one upon the other, to the lasting glory of Schloss Eltz, which has never been captured to this day.

It would be difficult to picture the amazement of Heinrich von Richenbach when he sat mute upon his horse at the brow of the wooded heights and for the first time beheld the imposing pile which had been erected by the Count von Eltz. It is startling enough to come suddenly upon a castle where no castle should be; but to find across one's path an erection that could hardly have been the product of other agency than the lamp of Aladdin was stupefying, and Heinrich drew the sunburned back of his hand across his eyes, fearing that they were playing him a trick; and seeing the wondrous vision still before him, he hastily crossed himself, an action performed somewhat clumsily through lack of practice, so that he might ward off enchantment, if, as seemed likely, that mountain of pinnacles was the work of the devil, and not placed there, stone on stone, by the hand of man. But in spite of crossing and the clearing of the eyes, Eltz Castle remained firmly seated on its stool of rock, and, when his

first astonishment had somewhat abated, Von Richenbach, who was a most practical man, began to realize that here, purely by a piece of unbelievable good luck, he had stumbled on the very secret he had been sent to unravel, the solving of which he had given up in despair, returning empty-handed to his grim master, the redoubtable Archbishop Baldwin of Treves.

It was now almost two months since the archbishop had sent him on the mission to the Rhine from which he was returning as wise as he went, well knowing that a void budget would procure him scant welcome from his imperious master. Here, at least, was important matter for the warlike Elector's stern consideration—an apparently impregnable fortress secretly built in the very center of the archbishop's domain; and knowing that the Count von Eltz claimed at least partial jurisdiction over this district, more especially that portion known as the Eltz-thal, in the middle of which this mysterious citadel had been erected, Heinrich rightly surmised that its construction had been the work of this ancient enemy of the archbishop.

Two months before, or nearly so, Heinrich von Richenbach had been summoned into the presence of the Lion of Treves at his palace in that venerable city. When Baldwin had dismissed all within the room save only Von Richenbach, the august prelate said:

"It is my pleasure that you at once take horse and proceed to my city of Mayence on the Rhine, where I am governor.

You will inspect the garrison there and report to me."

Heinrich bowed, but said nothing.

"You will then go down the Rhine to Elfield, where my new castle is built, and I shall be pleased to have an opinion regarding it."

The archbishop paused, and again his vassal bowed and remained silent.

"It is my wish that you go without escort, attracting as little attention as possible, and perhaps it may be advisable to return by the northern side of the Moselle, but some distance back from the river, as there are barons on the banks who might inquire your business, and regret their curiosity when they found they questioned a messenger of mine. We should strive during our brief sojourn on this inquisitive earth to put our fellow creatures to as little discomfort as possible."

Von Richenbach saw that he was being sent on a secret and possibly dangerous mission, and he had been long enough in the service of the crafty archbishop to know that the reasons ostensibly given for his journey were probably not those which were the cause of it, so he contented himself with inclining his head for the third time and holding his peace. The archbishop regarded him keenly for a few moments, a cynical smile hovering about his lips; then said, as if his words were an afterthought:

"Our faithful vassal, the Count von Eltz, is, if I mistake not, a neighbor of ours at Elfield?"

The sentence took, through its inflection, the nature of a query, and for the first time Heinrich von Richenbach ventured reply.

"He is, my lord."

The archbishop raised his eyes to the vaulted ceiling, and seemed for a time lost in thought, saying, at last, apparently in soliloquy, rather than direct address:

"Count von Eltz has been suspiciously quiet of late for a man so impetuous by nature. It might be profitable to know what interests him during this unwonted seclusion. It behooves us to acquaint ourselves with the motives that actuate a neighbor, so that opportunity arising, we may aid him with counsel or encouragement. If, therefore, it should so chance that, in the intervals of your inspection of governorship or castle, aught regarding the present occupation of the noble count comes to your ears, the information thus received may perhaps remain in your memory until you return to Treves."

The archbishop withdrew his eyes from the ceiling, the lids lowering over them, and flashed a keen, rapier-like glance at the man who stood before him.

Heinrich von Richenbach made low obeisance and replied:

"Whatever else fades from my memory, my lord, news of Count von Eltz shall remain there."

"See that you carry nothing upon you, save your commission as inspector, which my secretary will presently give to you. If you are captured it will be enough to proclaim yourself my emissary and exhibit your commission in proof of the peaceful nature of your embassy. And now to horse and away."

Thus Von Richenbach, well mounted, with his commission legibly engrossed in clerly hand on parchment, departed on the Roman road for Mayence, but neither there nor at Elfield could he learn more of Count von Eltz than was already known at Treves, which was to the effect that the nobleman, repenting him, it was said, of his stubborn opposition to the archbishop, had betaken himself to the Crusades in expiation of his wrong in shouldering arms against one who was both his temporal and spiritual over-lord; and this rumor coming to the ears of Baldwin, had the immediate effect of causing that prince of the church to despatch Von Richenbach with the purpose of learning accurately what his old enemy was actually about; for Baldwin, being an astute man, placed little faith in sudden conversion.

When Heinrich von Richenbach returned to Treves he was immediately ushered into the presence of his master.

"You have been long away," said the archbishop, a frown on his brow. "I trust the tidings you bring offer some slight compensation for the delay."

Then was Heinrich indeed glad that fate, rather than his own perspicacity, had led his horse to the heights above Schloss Eltz.

"The tidings I bring, my lord, are so astounding that I could not return to Treves without verifying them. This led me far afield, for my information was of the scantiest; but I am now enabled to vouch for the truth of my well-nigh incredible intelligence."

"Have the good deeds of the count then translated him bodily to heaven, as was the case with Elijah? Unloose your packet, man, and waste not so much time in the vaunting of your wares."

"The Count von Eltz, my lord, has

built a castle that is part palace, part fortress, and in its latter office well-nigh impregnable."

"Yes? And where?"

"In the Eltz-thal, my lord, a league and a quarter from the Moselle."

"Impossible!" cried Baldwin, bringing his clenched fist down on the table before him. "Impossible! You have been misled, Von Richenbach."

"Indeed, my lord, I had every reason to believe so until I viewed the structure with my own eyes."

"This, then, is the fruit of Von Eltz's contrition! To build a castle without permission within my jurisdiction, and defy me in my own domain. By the coat, he shall repent his temerity and wish himself twice over a captive of the Saracen ere I have done with him. I will despatch at once an army to the Eltz-thal, and there shall not be left one stone upon another when it returns."

"My lord, I beseech you not to move with haste in this matter. If twenty thousand men marched up to the Eltz-thal they could not take the castle. No such schloss was ever built before, and none to equal it will ever be built again, unless, as I suspect to be the case in this instance, the devil lends his aid."

"Oh, I doubt not that Satan built it, but he took the form and name of Count von Eltz while doing so," replied the archbishop, his natural anger at this bold defiance of his power giving way to his habitual caution, that, united with his resources and intrepidity, had much to do with his success. "You hold the castle, then, to be unassailable. Is its garrison, then, so powerful, or its position so strong?"

"The strength of its garrison, my lord, is in its weakness; I doubt if there are a score of men in the castle, but that is all the better, as there are fewer mouths to feed in case of siege, and the count has some four years' supplies in his vaults. The schloss is situated on a lofty, unscalable rock that stands in the center of a valley, as if it were a fortress itself. Then the walls of the building are of unbelievable height, with none of the round or square towers which castles usually possess, but having in plenty conical turrets, steep roofs, and the like, which give it the appearance of a fairy palace in a wide, enchanted amphitheater of green wooded hills, making the Schloss Eltz, all in all, a most miraculous sight, such as a man may not behold in many years' travel."

"In truth, Von Richenbach," said the archbishop, with a twinkle in his eye, "we should have made you one of our scrivening monks rather than a warrior, so marvelously do you describe the entrancing handiwork of our beloved vassal, the Count von Eltz. Perhaps you think it pity to destroy so fascinating a creation."

"Not so, my lord. I have examined the castle well, and I think were I entrusted with the commission I could reduce it."

"Ah, now we have modesty indeed! You can take the stronghold where I should fail."

"I did not say that you would fail, my lord. I said that twenty thousand men marching up the valley would fail, unless they were content to sit around the castle for four years or more."

"Answered like a courtier, Heinrich. What, then, is your method of attack?"

"On the height to the east, which is the nearest elevation to the castle, a strong fortress might be built, that would in a measure command the Schloss Eltz, although I fear the distance would be too great for any catapult to fling stones within its courtyard. Still, we might thus have complete power over the entrance to the schloss, and no more provender could be taken in."

"You mean, then, to wear Von Eltz out? That would be as slow a method as besiegement."

"To besiege would require an army, my lord, and would have this disadvantage, that, besides withdrawing from other use so many of your men, rumor would spread abroad that the count held you in check. The building of a fortress on the height would merely be doing what the count has already done, and it could be well garrisoned by twoscore men at the most, vigilant night and day to take advantage of any movement of fancied security to force way into the castle. There need be no formal declaration of hostilities, but a fortress built in all amicableness, to which the count could hardly object, as you would be but following his own example."

"I understand. We build a house near his for neighborliness. There is indeed much in your plan that commends itself to me, but I confess a liking for the underlying part of a scheme. Remains there anything else which you have not unfolded to me?"

"Placing in command of the new fortress a stout warrior who was at the same time a subtle man——"



"In other words, thyself, Heinrich— well, what then?"

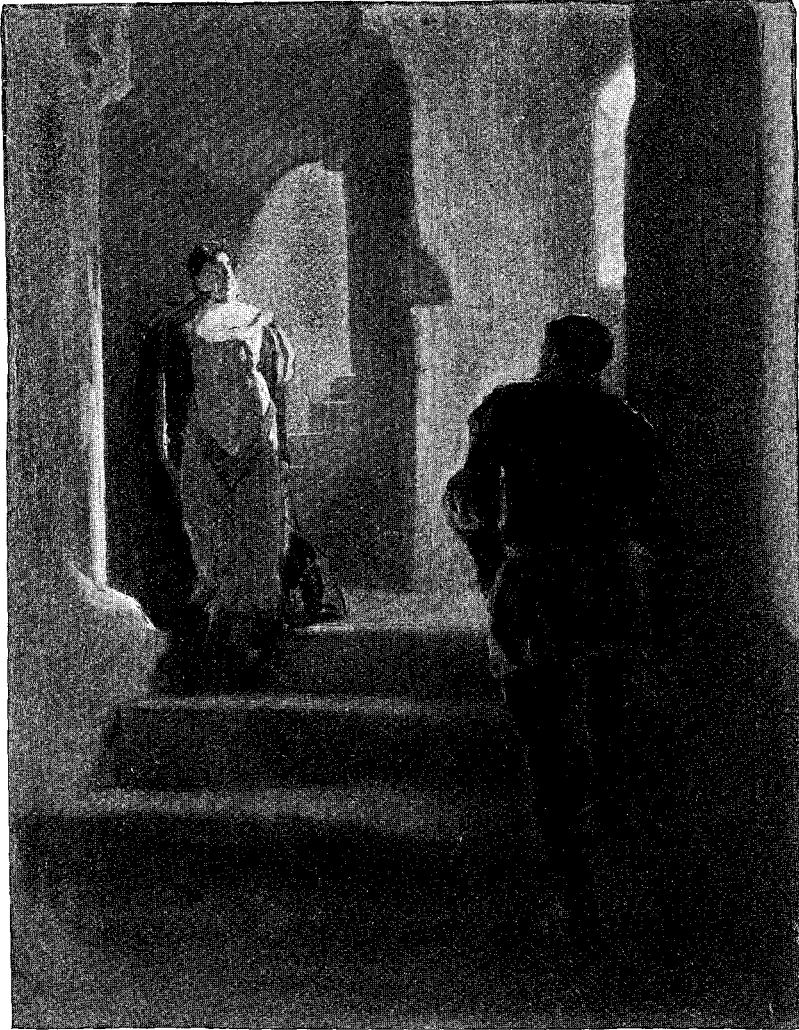
"There is every chance that such a general may learn much of the castle from one or other of its inmates. It

into possession of it by whatever means you choose to use."

Thus the square, long castle of Baldwin- eltz came to be builded, and thus Heinrich von Richenbach, brave, ingenious, and

unscrupulous, was installed captain of it, with twoscore men to keep him company, together with a plentiful supply of gold to bribe whomsoever he thought worth suborning.

Time went on without much to show for its passing, and Heinrich began to grow impatient, for his attempt at corrupting the garrison showed that negotiations were not without their dangers. Stout Baumstein, captain of the gate, was the man whom Heinrich most desired to purchase, for he could lessen the discipline at the portal of Schloss Eltz without attracting undue attention. But he was an iras-



"REGO CAME SUDDENLY UPON THE COUNTESS, WHO SCREAMED AT THE SIGHT OF HIM,"

might be possible that through neglect or inadvertence the drawbridge would be left down some night and the portcullis raised. In other words, the castle, impervious to direct assault, may fall by strategy."

"Excellent, excellent, my worthy warrior! I should dearly love to have captain of mine pay such an informal visit to his estimable countship. We shall build the fortress you suggest, and call it Baldwin- eltz. You shall be its commander, and I now bestow upon you Schloss Eltz, the only proviso being that you are to enter

cible German, whose strong right arm was readier than his tongue; and when Heinrich's emissary got speech with him, under a flag of truce, whispering that much gold might be had for a casual raising of the portcullis and lowering of the drawbridge, Baumstein at first could not understand his purport, for he was somewhat thick in the skull; but when the meaning of the message at last broke in upon him, he wasted no time in talk, but, raising his ever-ready battle ax, clove the envoy to the midriff. The Count von Eltz himself,

coming on the scene at this moment, was amazed at the deed, and sternly demanded of his gate captain why he had violated the terms of a parley. Baumstein's slowness of speech came near to being the undoing of him, for at first he merely said that such creatures as the messenger should not be allowed to live and that an honest soldier was insulted by holding converse with him; whereupon the count, having nice notions, picked up in polite countries, regarding the sacredness of a flag of truce, was about to hang Baumstein, scant though the garrison was, and even then it was but by chance that the true state of affairs became known to the count. He was on the point of sending back the body of the envoy to Von Richenbach with suitable apology for his destruction and offer of recompense, stating that the assailant would be seen hanging outside the gate, when Baumstein said that while he had no objection to being hanged if it so pleased the count, he begged to suggest that the gold which the envoy brought with him to bribe the garrison should be taken from the body before it was returned, and divided equally among the guard at the gate. As Baumstein said this, he was taking off his helmet and unbuckling his corselet, thus freeing his neck for the greater convenience of the castle hangman. When the count learned that the stout stroke of the battle-axe was caused by the proffer of a bribe for the betraying of the castle, he, to the amazement of all present, begged the pardon of Baumstein; for such a thing was never before known under the feudal law that a noble should apologize to a common man, and Baumstein himself muttered that he knew not what the world was coming to if a mighty lord might not hang an underling as it pleased him, cause or no cause.

The count commanded the body to be searched, and finding thereon some five bags of gold, distributed the coin among his men, as a good commander should, sending back the body to Von Richenbach, with a most polite message to the effect that as the archbishop evidently intended the money to be given to the garrison, the count had endeavored to carry out his lordship's wishes, as was the duty of an obedient vassal. But Heinrich, instead of being pleased with the courtesy of the message, broke into violent oaths, and spread abroad in the land the false saying that Count von Eltz had violated a flag of truce.

But there was one man in the castle who did not enjoy a share of the gold, because he was not a warrior, but a servant of the countess. This was a Spaniard named Rego, marvelously skilled in the concocting of various dishes of pastry and other niceties such as high-born ladies have a fondness for. Rego was disliked by the count, and, in fact, by all the stout Germans who formed the garrison, not only because it is the fashion for men of one country to justly abhor those of another, foreigners being in all lands regarded as benighted creatures whom we marvel that the Lord allows to live when he might so easily have peopled the whole world with men like unto ourselves; but, aside from this, Rego had a cat-like tread, and a furtive eye that never met another honestly as an eye should. The count, however, endured the presence of this Spaniard, because the countess admired his skill in confections, then unknown in Germany, and thus Rego remained under her orders.

The Spaniard's eye glittered when he saw the yellow of the gold, and his heart was bitter that he did not have a share of it. He soon learned where it came from, and rightly surmised that there was more in the same treasury, ready to be bestowed for similar service to that which the unready Baumstein had so emphatically rejected; so Rego, watching his opportunity, stole away secretly to Von Richenbach and offered his aid in the capture of the castle, should suitable compensation be tendered him. Heinrich questioned him closely regarding the interior arrangements of the castle, and asked him if he could find any means of letting down the drawbridge and raising the portcullis in the night. This Rego said, quite truly, was impossible, as the guard at the gate, vigilant enough before, had become much more so since the attempted bribery of the captain. There was, however, one way by which the castle might be entered, and that entailed a most perilous adventure. There was a platform between two of the lofty, steep roofs, so elevated that it gave a view over all the valley. On this platform a sentinel was stationed night and day, whose duty was that of outlook, like a man on the cross-trees of a ship. From this platform a stair, narrow at the top, but widening as it descended to the lower stories, gave access to the whole castle. If, then, a besieger constructed a ladder of enormous length, it might be placed at night on the narrow ledge of rock far below this platform, standing



almost perpendicular, and by this means man after man would be enabled to reach the roof of the castle, and, under the guidance of Rego, gain admittance to the lower rooms unsuspected.

"But the sentinel?" objected Von Richenbach.

"The sentinel I will myself slay. I will steal up behind him in the night when you make your assault, and running my knife into his neck, fling him over the cas-

sentinel, and thus allow us to climb by that?"

"It would be impossible for me to construct and conceal such a contrivance strong enough to carry more than one man at a time, even if I had the materials," said the wily Spaniard, whose thoughtfulness and ingenuity Heinrich could not but admire, while despising him as an oily foreigner. "If you made the rope ladder there would be no method of getting it into



AS QUICKLY AS HE COULD, LIT ONE CANDLE AFTER ANOTHER, UNTIL THE USUAL NUMBER BURNED BEFORE THE SACRED IMAGE!"

le wall; then I shall be ready to guide you down into the courtyard."

Von Richenbach, remembering the sheer precipice of rock at the foot of the castle walls and the dizzy height of the castle walls above the rock, could scarcely forbear a shudder at the thought of climbing so high on a shaky ladder, even if such a ladder could be made, of which he had some doubts. The scheme did not seem so feasible as the Spaniard appeared to imagine.

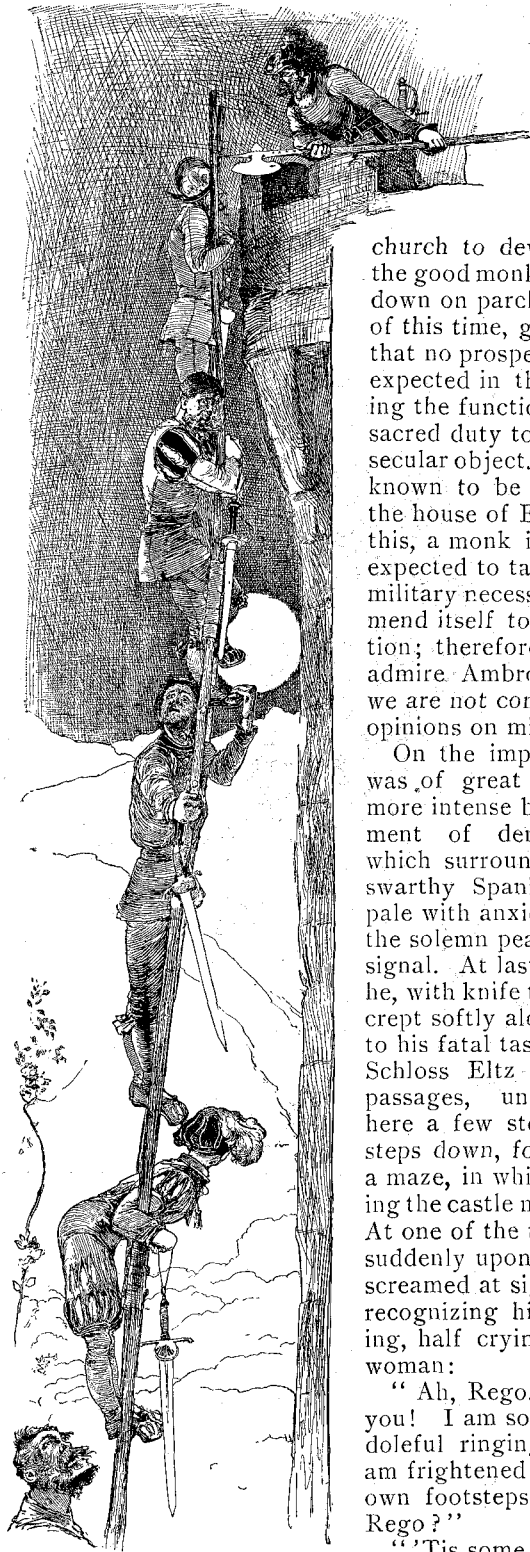
"Could you not let down a rope ladder from the platform when you had slain the

Schloss Eltz; besides, it would need to be double the length of a wooden ladder, for you can place your ladder at the foot of the ledge, then climb to the top of the rock, and, standing there, pull the ladder up, letting the higher end scrape against the castle wall until the lower end stands firm on the ledge of rock. Your whole troop could then climb, one following another, so that there would be no delay."

Thus it was arranged, and then began and was completed the construction of the longest and most wonderful ladder ever made in Germany or anywhere else,

so far as history records. It was composed of numerous small ladders, spliced and hooped with iron bands by the castle armorer. At a second visit, which Rego paid to Baldwineltz when the ladder was completed, all arrangements were made and the necessary signals agreed upon.

It was the pious custom of those in the fortress of Baldwineltz to ring the great bell on saints' days and other festivals that called for special observance, because Von Richenbach conducted war on the strictest principles, as a man knowing his duty both spiritual and temporal. It was agreed that on the night of the assault, when it was necessary that Rego should assassinate the sentinel, the great bell of the fortress should be rung, whereupon the Spaniard was to hie himself up the stair and send the watchman into another sphere of duty by means of his dagger. The bell-ringing seems a perfectly justifiable device, and one that will be approved by all conspirators, for the sounding of the bell, plainly heard in Schloss Eltz, would cause



"EXERTING ALL HIS STRENGTH, PUSHED THE LANCE OUTWARD, AND THE TOP OF THE LADDER WITH IT."

no alarm, as it was wont to sound at uncertain intervals, night and day, and was known to give tongue only during moments allotted by the

church to devout thoughts. But the good monk Ambrose, in setting down on parchment the chronicles of this time, gives it as his opinion that no prosperity could have been expected in thus suddenly changing the functions of the bell from sacred duty to the furtherance of a secular object. Still, Ambrose was known to be a sympathizer with the house of Eltz, and, aside from this, a monk in his cell cannot be expected to take the same view of military necessity that would commend itself to a warrior on a bastion; therefore, much as we may admire Ambrose as an historian, we are not compelled to accept his opinions on military ethics.

On the important night, which was of great darkness, made the more intense by the black environment of densely wooded hills which surround Schloss Eltz, the swarthy Spaniard became almost pale with anxiety as he listened for the solemn peal that was to be his signal. At last it tolled forth, and he, with knife to hand in his girdle, crept softly along the narrow halls to his fatal task. The interior of Schloss Eltz is full of intricate passages, unexpected turnings, here a few steps up, there a few steps down, for all the world like a maze, in which even one knowing the castle might well go astray. At one of the turnings Rego came suddenly upon the countess, who screamed at sight of him, and then recognizing him said, half laughing, half crying, being a nervous woman:

"Ah, Rego, thank heaven it is you! I am so distraught with the doleful ringing of that bell that I am frightened at the sound of my own footsteps. Why rings it so, Rego?"

"'Tis some church festival, my lady, which they fighting for the archbishop are more familiar with

than I," answered the trembling Spaniard, as frightened as the lady herself at the unexpected meeting. But the countess was a most religious woman, well skilled in the observances of her church, and she replied:

"No, Rego. There is no cause for its dolorous music, and to-night there seems to me something ominous and menacing in its tone, as if disaster impended."

"It may be the birthday of the archbishop, my lady, or of the pope himself."

"Our holy father was born in May, and the archbishop in November. Ah, I would that this horrid strife were done with! But our safety lies in heaven, and if our duty be accomplished here on earth, we should have naught to fear; yet I tremble as if great danger lay before me. Come, Rego, to the chapel, and light the candles at the altar."

The countess passed him, and for one fateful moment Rego's hand hovered over his dagger, thinking to strike the lady dead at his feet; but the risk was too great, for there might at any time pass along the corridor one of the servants, who would instantly raise the alarm and bring disaster upon him. He dare not disobey. So grinding his teeth in impotent rage and fear, he followed his mistress to the chapel, and, as quickly as he could, lit one candle after another, until the usual number burned before the sacred image. The countess was upon her knees as he tried to steal softly from the room. "Nay, Rego," she said, raising her bended head, "light them all to-night. Harken! That raven bell has ceased even as you lighted the last candle."

The countess, as has been said, was a devout lady, and there stood an unusual number of candles before the altar, several of which burned constantly, but only on notable occasions were all the candles lighted. As Rego hesitated, not knowing what to do in this crisis, the lady repeated: "Light all the candles to-night, Rego."

"You said yourself, my lady," murmured the agonized man, cold sweat breaking out on his forehead, "that this was not a saint's day."

"Nevertheless, Rego," persisted the countess, surprised that even a favorite servant should thus attempt to thwart her will, "I ask you to light each candle. Do so at once."

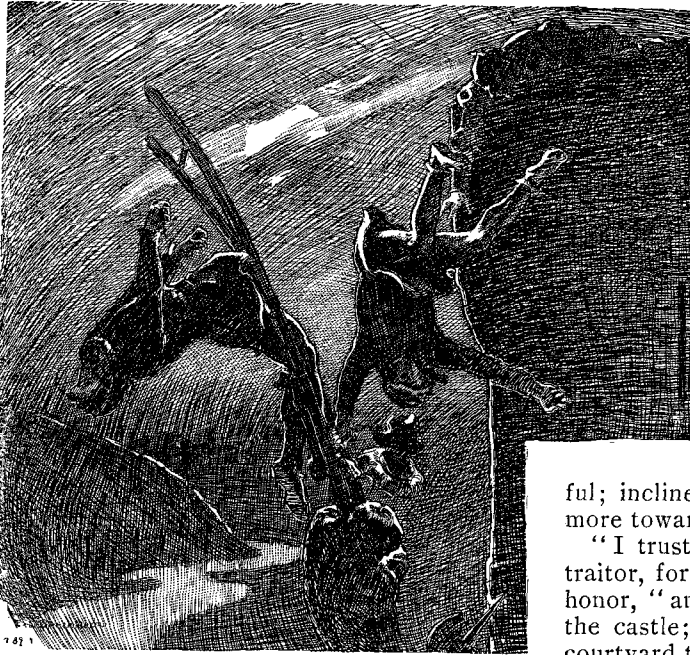
She bowed her head as one who had spoken the final word, and again her fate trembled in the balance; but Rego heard the footsteps of the count entering the

gallery above him, that ran across the end of the chapel, and he at once resumed the lighting of the candles, making less speed in his eagerness than if he had gone about his task with more care.

The monk Ambrose draws a moral from this episode, which is sufficiently obvious when after events have confirmed it, but which we need not here pause to consider, when an episode of the most thrilling nature is going forward on the lofty platform of Eltz Castle.

The sentinel paced back and forward within his narrow limit, listening to the depressing and monotonous tolling of the bell and cursing it, for the platform was a lonely place and the night of inky darkness. At last the bell ceased, and he stood resting on his long pike, enjoying the stillness, and peering into the blackness, when suddenly he became aware of a grating, rasping sound below him, as if some one were attempting to climb the precipitous beetling cliff of castle wall and slipping against the stones. His heart stood still with fear, for he knew it could be nothing human. An instant later something appeared over the parapet that could be seen only because it was blacker than the distant dark sky against which it was outlined. It rose and rose until the sentinel saw it was the top of a ladder, which was even more amazing than if the fiend himself had scrambled over the stone coping, for we know the devil can go anywhere, while a ladder cannot. But the soldier was a common-sense man, and, dark as was the night, he knew that, tall as such a ladder must be, there seemed a likelihood that human power was pushing it upward. He touched it with his hands and convinced himself that there was nothing supernatural about it. The ladder rose inch by inch, slowly, for it must have been no easy task for even twoscore men to raise it thus with ropes or other devices, especially when the bottom of it neared the top of the ledge. The soldier knew he should at once give the alarm; but he was the second traitor in the stronghold, corrupted by the sight of the glittering gold he had shared, and only prevented from selling himself because the rigors of military rule did not give him opportunity of going to Baldwineltz as the less exacting civilian duties had allowed the Spaniard to market his wares. So the sentry made no outcry, but silently prepared a method by which he could negotiate with advantage to himself when the first head appeared above the parapet.





"WITH A GURGLING CRY, PLUNGED HEADLONG FORWARD, AND DOWN THE PRECIPICE."

He fixed the point of his lance against a round of the ladder, and when the leading warrior, who was no other than Heinrich von Richenbach, came slowly and cautiously to the top of the wall, the sentinel, exerting all his strength, pushed the lance outward, and the top of the ladder with it, until it stood nearly perpendicular some two yards back from the wall.

"In God's name, what are you about? Is that you, Rego?"

The soldier replied, calmly:

"Order your men not to move, and do not move yourself, until I have some converse with you. Have no fear if you are prepared to accept my terms; otherwise you will have ample time to say your prayers before you reach the ground, for the distance is great."

Von Richenbach, who now leaned over the top round, suspended thus between heaven and earth, grasped the lance with both hands, so that the ladder might not be thrust beyond the perpendicular. In quivering voice he passed down the word that no man was to shift foot or hand until he had made bargain with the sentinel who held them in such extreme peril.

"What terms do you propose to me, soldier?" he asked, breathlessly.

"I will conduct you down to the court-

yard, and when you have surprised and taken the castle you will grant me safe conduct and give me five bags of gold equal in weight to those offered to our captain."

"All that will I do and double the treasure. Faithfully and truly do I promise it."

"You pledge me your knightly word, and swear also by the holy coat of Treves?"

"I pledge and swear.

And pray you be careful; incline the ladder yet a little more toward the wall."

"I trust to your honor," said the traitor, for traitors love to prate of honor, "and will now admit you to the castle; but until we are in the courtyard there must be silence."

"Incline the ladder gently, for it is so weighted that if it come suddenly against the wall, it may break in the middle."

At this supreme moment, as the sentinel was preparing to bring them cautiously to the wall, when all was deep silence, there crept swiftly and noiselessly through the trap-door the belated Spaniard. His catlike eyes beheld the shadowy form of the sentinel bending apparently over the parapet, but they showed him nothing beyond. With the speed and precipitation of a springing panther, the Spaniard leaped forward and drove his dagger deep into the neck of his comrade, who, with a gurgling cry, plunged headlong forward, and down the precipice, thrusting his lance as he fell. The Spaniard's dagger went with the doomed sentinel, sticking fast in his throat, and its presence there passed a fatal noose around the neck of Rego later, for they wrongly thought the false sentinel had saved the castle and that the Spaniard had murdered a faithful watchman.

Rego leaned panting over the stone coping, listening for the thud of the body. Then was he frozen with horror when the still night air was split with the most appalling shriek of combined human voices in an agony of fear that ever tortured the ear of man. The shriek ended in a crash far below, and silence again filled the valley.

# RUPERT OF HENTZAU.

FROM THE MEMOIRS OF FRITZ VON TARLENHEIM.

BY ANTHONY HOPE.

Being the sequel to a story by the same writer entitled "The Prisoner of Zenda."

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES DANA GIBSON.

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF EARLIER CHAPTERS.

Prompted by his own ambition, the Duke of Strelsau, known as "Black Michael," drugs and hides away his brother Rudolf on the eve of the latter's coronation as King of Ruritania. But at the instigation of Colonel Sapt and Fritz von Tarlenheim, supporters of Rudolf, an English relative of his, Rudolf Rassendyll—a stranger and chance visitor in the kingdom, who so closely resembles Rudolf that few can tell them apart—appears, and, in his name, assumes the crown for him. While Rudolf's friends are working to set him free, Rassendyll continues to hold the throne in Rudolf's guise and exercise all the royal functions—even to falling ardently in love with the Princess Flavia, and provoking her to love him as ardently in return. Public expectation and policy have designated the Princess to become the new king's wife. "Black Michael" is finally killed in a quarrel by Rupert of Hentzau, one of his accomplices. The Princess Flavia has felt from the first a difference between the two Rudolfs; before the end, the truth is fully discovered to her. She dutifully marries the real king, but her

heart hardly goes with her hand. Thereafter, once a year, she sends a gift and a brief verbal message to Rassendyll in token of her remembrance of him. And these incidents and events make the story of "The Prisoner of Zenda."

The present history opens with the king grown weak and querulous, and the sense of the difference between him and the man who had courted her in his name more importunate than ever in the mind and heart of the queen. She dare not longer trust herself in sending the yearly message to Rassendyll. She therefore writes him a letter that is to be her last word to him. But the messenger, Fritz von Tarlenheim, is betrayed by his servant Bauer; set upon at Wintenberg by Rupert of Hentzau and the Count of Luzau-Rischenheim, general conspirators against the peace of the kingdom; robbed of the letter, and himself left beaten insensible. As soon as he revives, he reports his disaster and loss to Rassendyll, who places him under the care of his own servant James, and then sets out secretly for Zenda, to keep the letter from coming into the hands of the king.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AN EDDY ON THE MOAT.

ON the evening of Thursday, the sixteenth of October, the Constable of Zenda was very much out of humor; he has since confessed as much. To risk the peace of a palace for the sake of a lover's greeting had never been wisdom to his mind, and he had been sorely impatient with "that fool Fritz's" yearly pilgrimage. The letter of farewell had been an added folly, pregnant with chances of disaster. Now disaster, or the danger of it, had come. The curt, mysterious telegram from Wintenberg, which told him so little, at least told him that It ordered him—and he did not know even whose the order was—to delay Rischenheim's audience, or, if he could not, to get the king away from Zenda: why he was to act thus was not disclosed to him. But he knew as well as I that Rischenheim was completely in Rupert's hands, and he could not fail to guess that something had gone wrong at Wintenberg, and that Rischenheim came to tell the king some news that the king must not hear. His task sounded simple, but it was not easy; for he did not know where Rischenheim was, and so could not prevent his coming; besides, the king had been very pleased to learn of the

count's approaching visit, since he desired to talk with him on the subject of a certain breed of dogs, which the count bred with great, his Majesty with only indifferent success; therefore he had declared that nothing should interfere with his reception of Rischenheim. In vain Sapt told him that a large boar had been seen in the forest, and that a fine day's sport might be expected if he would hunt next day. "I shouldn't be back in time to see Rischenheim," said the king.

"Your Majesty would be back by nightfall," suggested Sapt.

"I should be too tired to talk to him, and I've a great deal to discuss."

"You could sleep at the hunting-lodge, sire, and ride back to receive the count next morning."

"I'm anxious to see him as soon as may be." Then he looked up at Sapt with a sick man's quick suspicion. "Why shouldn't I see him?" he asked.

"It's a pity to miss the boar, sire," was all Sapt's plea. The king made light of it.

"Curse the boar!" said he. "I want to know how he gets the dogs' coats so fine."

As the king spoke a servant entered, carrying a telegram for Sapt. The colonel took it and put it in his pocket.

"Read it," said the king. He had dined and was about to go to bed, it being nearly ten o'clock.