

THE MASKED HORSEMAN.

THE battle of Naseby, which was so disastrous in its results to the fortunes of the house of Stuart, was, in a manner, but the culminating of the numerous evil omens which had so long been menacing the luckless king.

Among the many stalwart youths of England which the exigencies of the period forced into the decisions and actions of men, were three of about equal ages, and who, however dissimilar in form and temperament, had held each other in the warmest friendship and estimation. Sylvester King, Arthur Dale and Robert Hipsesley—for these were their respective names—led a thoughtless, happy life, until the dissensions of party began to disturb the peace of the people and the discordant trumpet of civil war to sound throughout the land.

The consequence of these events to our three friends was that the rough hand of war soon separated them—although, for a period, Sylvester King and Arthur Dale fought in a cavalier regiment together, while Roger Hipsesley took a command under General Lord Fairfax.

Roger Hipsesley, the Puritan soldier, had a beautiful young sister—a creature of that haughty bearing and dazzling loveliness which united with itself all that is high-born and peaceful in the air of court that had grafted upon its venerable-etiquette the polish and splendors of that of the French monarch.

It had been the custom for the three young friends to spend their vacations by turns at each other's homes. Roger's was the only one where an attraction of more than an unusual degree was to be found. Sylvester King could give them amusement with horses and hounds—Arthur Dale, whose family lived in the wild border land, could lead them into the track of the deer, or bear them across the lake in his light and buoyant bark. But in the graver home of Roger Hipsesley there was this magnificent young creature, who was so different from the stern, grave-looking person she called father, and whose face grew brighter by contrast when one looked on the serious but handsome face of her brother.

Thus the early training of Henrietta rendered the tranquillity of home distasteful to her. By her mother's side she was connected with a high-born and titled royalist family. This branch the elder Hipsesley, since he had been aroused into action and had taken his share of duty both in Parliament and in the field, had repudiated with needless acerbity.

Beautiful and vain, at the age of eighteen; flattered and caressed at court, and moving in the higher circles of rank and fashion, then remarkable for their elegance and polish, the dull sameness of Hipsesley Hall repelled Henrietta, and when the college holidays came on, the presence of her brother's friends amused and distracted her, while at that season of the year a continual influx of guests, coming and going, lightened the monotony of home, and so far rendered existence endurable.

The result, in fine, was that the two young men began to find themselves strangely moved in the presence of the bright creature who was so witty, so accomplished, and who had such inconceivable fascinations for them.

Henrietta, when conversing with her brother about his friends, (and Roger Hipsesley loved both equally as well, without having then any partiality for the one or the other) could not deny that she liked Arthur—respected him; but then Sylvester was so handsome, had such an elegance of manner, was gallant, danced with grace and in fine she showed that the superficial had more attractions for her—that a glittering exterior had a greater hold than any qualities which commanded mere respect.

So Henrietta Hipsesley was betrothed to Sylvester King, and Roger Hipsesley regretted it; for several matters since had, from time to time, come to light, showing that Sylvester was not so worthy of the love and devotion which Henrietta bestowed upon him as he ought to have been.

On the other hand, the anger and indignation of her father knew no bounds when he learned that his daughter had betrothed herself to a royalist; and as these feelings had become embittered by some three or four years of constant broils and battles—by desperate sieges, reciprocal deeds of vengeance, and the fearful issues of the stricken fields—they were only the more confirmed and established.

It had once happened that after a desperate skirmish between a party of royalists and parliamentarians, the latter being routed, in hastening from the field where the dying and dead showed how fierce the fight had been, made toward the ancient hall where the Hipsesleys, as country gentlemen, had dwelt for generations.

During the troublesome times, too, it had been strengthened and fortified sufficiently to resist an attack from the

numerous parties of stragglers which scoured the country sometimes; and knowing the zeal of its owner, this party of some score or so of horses had no doubt but that there they should receive help and shelter.

Food and refreshments were liberally enough bestowed upon the faint and weary soldiers, who had ridden long and hard and fiercely contested fight, and their leader having made his acknowledgments for the succor received, they were about to mount their horses and take their departure at once, when the sound of a trumpet and the crackle of dropping shot from musketoon and petronel, added to the fierce cries of men and the clatter of horses' hoofs, told them that they were surprised and that the cavaliers, with their numbers increased on the way, were upon them.

All was now alarm and confusion.—The courtyard became a scene of slaughter, for the cavaliers fought with the rancor of defeated hopes—this being a mere temporary success—and the Puritans fought with a fury as dogged and decided; and while some few escaped, the greater part were slain or wounded, and they were about to fire the house when a horseman, whose foaming bit and steed's bleeding sides told of the hot haste he had made, dashed among the cavaliers and bade them hold their hands.

It was Arthur Drake, who had a command in the regiment, and who came up just at the instant when the few who were being actually massacred—and whose bravery might have won forbearance—were spared, out of respect which the men still paid toward their commanding officer.

But, in the meantime, a singular scene was passing within the hall.

The cavalier party was actually commanded by Sylvester King, who, at the very moment that his men were committing murderous excesses upon the surprised Puritans, was actually having an interview with Henrietta; and forgetful of all the ties which bound him to respect her, and for her sake those who dwelt beneath the shadow of the old Puritan's roof, was proposing to her the base plan of flight with him.

"Miscreant!" exclaimed a deep, harsh voice emanating from one corner of the chamber. "Despiser of that which you should hold most holy! Traitor to that trust which you should, in your profession, hold most sacred! Do you show yourself to this devoted girl in your true colors? And you, fickle and foolish!" turning to his daughter who stood pale and trembling, "do you listen to the blandishments of him, who would woo you to your dishonor and ruin, and whose hand is even now lifted against the life of him to whom you owe your being?"

Sylvester had recovered from his surprise by this time, and believing that the old Puritan was alone and unattended—for he also seemed to have ridden hard for his life, and to have entered his house by a secret way—the cavalier with a laugh of irony and a bow of mock respect, said:

"Save you, good sir, I was returning good for evil, you will perceive, and repaying the father's hate by loving his daughter. We are the victors to-day, and you will do well to yield to the chances of war."

"Thou liest, man! and that will soon be seen. So, release your hold and quit the chamber, your presence pollutes; for even her presence shall not protect you from my vengeance!"

And as he spoke he drew his sword and advanced, with a dark brow and a flashing eye, to part them.

But, as if this had roused up all that was bad in nature, Sylvester, who had been irritated by the Puritan's words, seized a pistol in his belt, and pointing it full at his opponent's breast fired, and the bullet struck him in the shoulder, so that the sword fell out of his nerveless hand.

"Spare him! In heaven's name, do not lift your hand against my father!" shrieked Henrietta, as she, in turn, sank fainting into a chair.

"What, ho, there!" shouted Sylvester, stamping his foot, as two or three troopers entered. "Here, corporal, we have a found a prize. Take your belts and strap up the old roundhead in one of your saddles and let two men guard him. He will do for ransom if he can be of no other use."

And while the men, with but little tenderness, bound and bore the wounded Puritan away, Sylvester turned toward Henrietta, having determined to take her away with him, when Arthur Dale, fearing some mischief might happen to her whom he loved better than his life, entered the chamber.

He was horror-stricken at the sight, and burst into a torrent of reproaches against his quondam friend and superior officer, and, in the heat of the moment, their swords crossed, and the chamber became the scene of a deadly combat, Sylvester being severely wounded, and only rescued by the entrance of his

men. In the revengeful feeling which actuated him, Sylvester ordered them to seize upon Arthur; and putting him under arrest for lifting his hand against a superior officer, he deprived him of his sword, and sent him away guarded. A body of them, commanded by a corporal, had already quit the hall, bearing the elder Hipsesley with them. Henrietta in the meantime escaped with her nurse into some secret recess of the old hall.

Hipsesley was borne away a prisoner, weak and fainting from his wound, and led by Sylvester King, was carried to the royalists' camp some miles away.—Another body, having Arthur Dale still under arrest, hurried on toward headquarters; but this was not so fortunate, for meeting with a strong reinforcement about to join the forces of Cromwell, it was surrounded by the enemy and taken in turn. Arthur thus becoming a prisoner, to Roger Hipsesley, who commanded the force, and who instantly liberated him on his parole. It was not long, therefore, before the friends exchanged confidences, and Roger learned what a debt he owed to Sylvester for having sought to slay his father so foully and to make his sister forget her duty.

It was on a bright and breezy noon sometime after Naseby was fought that a solitary horseman might have been seen crossing, by a bridle road, a section of that portion of Charnwood forest, or what was left of it, which shortened the distance by some few miles, to a town yet held for the royalists, but which was being riddled by the cannon of Cromwell's gunners and fast yielding fate.

The horseman was Sylvester King, and, as he was urging his steed over a rising ground; and turning over in his mind the prospects which were working in his breast, he saw, on the opposite verge, riding to meet him, a masked horseman in the guise of a cavalier, who pulled up his strongly built animal in front, as though he intended to dispute the pass.

"Halt!" cried the masked horseman, "you carry some papers I require!"

In effect, Sylvester King had these important papers on his person.

One paper was the death warrant of Arthur Dale—yielded to his party, by the way, at an exchange of prisoners—and which Sylvester had obtained from Claverhouse in a fit of pitiless malignance, Henrietta having meanwhile been removed to safer keeping in the metropolis, and where her pseudo lover dared not seek her. This warrants the false lover and forsworn friend had sworn to put force.

"Who dares to stop me!" cried Sylvester, drawing a petronel and seeking to discharge it, uselessly, however, for by accident or design it flashed in the pan.

"Traitor! False friend! Blot upon the very cause which some noble hearts have almost rendered holy, yield the papers you carry about you, or you yield your life!"

"Ha, Master Hipsesley! Do you follow the practices of these forests, and set your life upon so loose a cast of the die?" exclaimed Sylvester, in a scoffing voice, which had once been so honest and cheery.

"You would have slain my father foully; you would have assassinated your friend; you would have robbed me of my sister; you have in me the man who avenges these wrongs, which in your black purpose have become crimes!"

And Hipsesley, riding at him, their swords crossed, and their horses came into such fierce collision that the cavalier was forced to leap off to avoid falling.

The next moment beheld a short but deadly duel.

The passes—one for each piece of villainy—saw Sylvester King lying stark and dead upon the ground, his set teeth and drawn lips yet grinning in mockery at the sky.

And then—risking his life upon the chances of war, risking all that was dear to him upon the daring that had made him journey miles to know the man's full intentions ere he would thoroughly believe his old companion's villainy—Roger rifled his doublet of papers, and then, by a circuitous route, arrived in safety at his own quarters.

As a measure of gratitude, means for the rescue of his father—then easily managed—out of the hands of the royalists were then taken, and the old man restored to his son.

And ere long followed the union of her worthy lover and Henrietta, who, having learned the value of simple outer show, began to learn that there was an inner worth which might bring her a blessing to cultivate.

And thus the "Masked Horseman" played in the protean drama one of those protean parts which it was given to the men of those turbulent times to perform.

A Scared Countryman.

On last Thursday night the proprietor of Cosby's hotel, St. Louis, detected a gas leak and traced it to room No. 2, occupied by a countryman. The proprietor rapped up the occupant, who, however, could not be made to understand about the gas, and would not allow the proprietor to come into the room. The latter was urgent, and his rural guest, who, as it afterwards transpired, had a couple of hundred dollars with him, soon grew alarmed at his evident intention to get in. He was totally devoid of smell and had been accustomed only to candles and could not understand what the landlord was talking about, and finally became persuaded that the intention was to rob him, he first warned the landlord and then fired seven shots in rapid succession in the direction of the landlord's voice, each bullet going through the door. By the time the firing ceased the landlord was down stairs. Arguing that the lodger was probably now out of ammunition, he persuaded the night clerk to go up and explain matters. The night clerk listened at the door and thought he heard the boarder loading up. He knocked gently and then skipped to one side. In answer to a fierce "Who's there," the clerk commended a mild suggestion about turning off the gas, but the bullets began to rain in so thick and fast, that, following the example of his employer, he hastily took refuge below. A couple of police officers next appeared, and opened up a conversation with the belligerent, relative to the escaping gas. Their overture being met by threats, the door was broken open, and the countryman was discovered sitting on the bed without his apparel, reloading a navy revolver. He at once claimed the protection of the officers, and complained that the hotel people had been trying all night to break into his room. He was much surprised to find nobody hurt and very much disgusted when the gas was explained to him. He professed his determination whenever he went to a tavern again to take a candle with him.

Get What He Asked For.

The *Detroit News* tells the following: A facetious young man who boards in a hotel not very far from Grand River avenue, was badly taken down at the dinner table a day or two ago. The servant who took his order was a good-looking sort of a girl, and when toward the end of the meal she asked him if he wanted anything more, he replied: "Yes, I would like a kiss."

The girl left the room, and told her grievance to the landlady, who happened to be in the kitchen.

Without saying a word the venerable dame wiped her withered lip and proceeded to the room. The young man sat in his chair laughing at the girl's discomfiture, but he quickly changed his tune when the old woman threw her arms about his neck and pressed her dewy lip to his again and again. The fellow struggled to get away, but the old woman held him fast, and showered kisses upon his burning face, until he finally made a supreme effort, tore himself loose from her clutches, and fled for dear life, pursued by the mocking laugh of his companions.

Breadth of the United States.

Few people are aware that the proud boast of Englishmen that the sun never sets on the British Empire is equally applicable to the United States. Instead of being the western limit of the Union, San Francisco is only about midway between the furthest Aleutian Isle, acquired by our purchase of Alaska, and Eastport, Me. Our territory extends through 197° of longitude, or 17° more than half way round the globe.—The *Rocky Mountain Presbyterian*, in commenting on this subject, says:

"When the sun is giving its good-night kiss to our westernmost Isle, on the confines of Behring's sea, it is already flooding the fields and forests of Maine with its morning light, and in the eastern part of that State is more than an hour high. At the very moment when the Aleutian fisherman, warned by the approaching shades of night, is pulling his canoe toward the shore, the wood-chopper of Maine is beginning to make the forest echo with the stirring music of his ax."

Almost Young Again.

"My mother was afflicted a long time with Neuralgia and a dull, heavy inactive condition of the whole system; headache, nervous prostration, and was almost helpless. No physicians or medicines did her any good. Three months ago she began to use Hop Bitters, with such good effect that she seems and feels young again, although over 70 years old. We think there is no other medicine fit to use in the family."—A lady, in Providence, R. I.

Our Devil says that the list of marriages in the newspapers ought to be put under the head of "Ring Frauds." His girl has probably gone back on him.

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