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# STHE S

By A. CONAN DOYLE, Author of "The Return of Sherlock Holmes"

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he. "Methinks that it were well for me to pass my dagger through his throat." "Not for your life!" cried the leader. "If he die without wound, they cannot lay it to our charge. Turn now to the other."

The man bent over De Catinat and placed his hand upon his heart. As he did so the soldier heaved a long sigh, opened his eyes and gazed about him with the face of one who knows neither where he is nor how he came there. De Vivonne, who had drawn his hat down over his eyes and muffled the lower part of his face in his mantle, took out his flask and poured a little of the contents down the injured man's throat. In an instant a dash of color had come back into the guardsman's bloodless cheeks and the light of memory into his eyes. He struggled up on to his feet and strove furiously to push away those who held him. But his head still swam, and he could scarce hold himself erect.

"I must to Paris," he gasped. "I must to Paris. It is the king's mission. You stop me at your peril." "He has no hurt save a scratch," said

the ex-doctor. "Then hold him fast. And first carry

the dving man to the carriage." The lantern threw but a small ring of yellow light, so that when it had been carried over to De Catinat Amos Green was left lying in the shadow. Now they brought the light back to

where the young man lay. But there was no sign of him. He was gone. De Vivonne caught the false doctor by the throat and, hurling him down, would have choked him upon the spot

had the others not dragged them apart. "You lying dog!" he cried. "Is this your skill? The man has fled, and we are ruined!"

"He has done it in his death struggle!" gasped the other hoarsely. "He cannot be far off."

"That is true. He cannot be far off," cried De Vivonne. "He has neither horse nor arms. You, Despard and Raymond de Carnac, guard the other, that he play us no trick. Do you, Latour, and you, Turberville, ride down the road and wait by the south gate. If he enter Paris at all he must come in that way. If you get him, tie him before you on your horse and bring him to the rendezvous. In any case, it matters little, for he is a stranger, this fellow, and only here by chance."

The two horsemen rode off in pursuit of the fugitive, and De Catinat, still struggling desperately to escape, was dragged down the St. Germain road and thrust into the carriage, which had waited at some distance while these incidents were being enacted. Three of the horsemen rode ahead, the coachman was curtly ordered to follow them, and De Vivonne, having dispatched one of the band with a note to his sister, followed after the coach with the remainder of his

desperadoes. The unfortunate guardsman had now entirely recovered his senses and found himself with a strap round his ankles and another round his wrists, a captive inside a moving prison which lumbered heavily along the country road. He had been stunned by the shock of his fall, and his leg was badly bruised by the weight of his horse. His mind, however, pained him more than his body. He sank his head into his pinioned hands and stamped madly with his feet, rocking himself to and fro in his despair. What a fool, a treble fool, he had been! He, an old soldier, who had seen something of war, to walk with open eyes into such a

But then came a return of that common sense which lies so very closely beneath the impetuosity of the Celt. The matter was done now, and he must see if it could not be mended. Amos Green had escaped. That was one grand point in his favor. And Amos Green had heard the king's message and realized its importance. It was true that he knew nothing of Paris, but surely a man who could pick his way at night through the forests of Maine would not be balked in finding so well known a house as that of the archbishop of Paris.

And then the thought of escape occurred to his mind. Might he not even now be in time perhaps to carry his own message? Who were these men who had seized him? And where were they taking him to? Full of curiosity,

he peered out of the windows. A horseman was riding close up on front of the carriage, and through this he could gain some idea as to his whereabouts. The clouds had cleared now, and the moon was shining brightly, bathing the whole wide landscape in its shimmering light. To the right lay the open country, broad plains with clumps of woodland and the towers of castles pricking out from above the destination, it was neither the capital nor Versailles. Then he began to count the chances of escape. His sword had been removed, and his pistols were still in the holsters beside his unfortunate horse. He was unarmed, then, even if he could free himself, and his captors were at least a dozen in number. There were three on ahead, riding abreast along the white moonlit road. Then there was one on each side, and he should judge by the clatter of hoofs that there could not be fewer than half

a dozen behind. That would make exactly twelve, including the coachmantoo many, surely, for an unarmed man to hope to baffle. At the thought of the coachman he had glanced through the glass front at the broad back of the man, and he had suddenly in the glimmer of the carriage lamp observed something which struck him with hor-

The man was evidently desperately wounded. It was strange indeed that he could still sit there and flick his whip with so terrible an injury. In the back of his great red coat, just under the left shoulder blade, was a gash in the cloth where some weapon had passed, and all round was a wide patch of dark scarlet which told its own tale. Nor was this all. As he raised his whip the moonlight shone upon his hand, and De Catinat saw, with a shudder, that it also was splashed and clogged with blood. The guardsman craned his neck to catch a glimpse of the man's face, but his broad brimmed hat was drawn low, and the high collar of his driving coat was raised, so that his features were in the shadow.

And now they had come to a spot where the main road ran onward, but a smaller side track wound away down the steep slope of a hill, and so in the Cirection of the Seine. The advance mard had kept to the main road and the two horsemen on either side were trotting in the same direction when, to De Catinat's amazement, the carriage

suddenly swerved to one side and in an instant plunged down the steep incline, the two stout horses galloping at their topmost speed, the coachman standing up and lashing furiously at them and the clumsy old vehicle bounding along in a way which threw him backward and forward from one seat to the other. Behind him he could hear a shout of consternation from the escort and then the rush of galloping hoofs. Fast as the coach went, its pursuers went faster still. The rattle of their hoofs was at the very back, and suddenly at one of the windows there came into view the red, distended nostrils of a horse. Slowly it drew forward, the muzzle, the eye, the ears, the mane, coming into sight as the rider still gained, and then above them the fierce face of Despard and the gleam of a brass pistol.

"At the horse, Despard; at the horse!" cried an authoritative voice from behind.

The pistol flashed, and the coach lurched over as one of the horses gave a convulsive spring. But the driver still shrieked and lashed with his whip. while the carriage bounded onward.

But now the road turned a sudden curve, and there, right in front of



"At the horse, Despard; at the horse!" them, not a hundred paces away, was the Seine, running cold and still in the moonshine. The bank on either side of the highway ran straight down without any break to the water's edge. There was no sign of a bridge, and a black shadow in the center of the was returning after conveying some either side, but there was glass in however, when they first felt the cold water about their hocks, and even as they did so one of them, with a low moan, fell over upon her side. Despard's bullet had found its mark. Like a flash the coachman hurled himself from the box and plunged into the stream, but the pursuing horsemen were all round him before this, and half a dozen hands had seized him ere groves. On the left, but far away, lay he could reach deep water and had the glimmer of Paris. They were leav- dragged him to the bank. His broad ing it rapidly behind. Whatever his hat had been struck off in the struggle, and De Catinat saw his face in the moonshine. Great heavens! It was Amos Green.

> CHAPTER XII. HE desperadoes were as much astonished as was De Catinat when they found that they had recaptured in this extraordinary manner the messenger whom they had given up for lost.

"A thousand thunders!"

'And this is the man whom that devil's brat Latour would make out to be dead!"

"And how came he here?" "And where is Etienne Arnaud?" "He has stabbed Etienne, and taken

his coat and hat." "What! While we were all within stone's cast?"

"Aye, there is no other way out of

"By my soul," cried old Despard, "I had never much love for old Etienne, but I have emptied a cup of wine with him before now, and I shall see that he has justice. Let us cast these reins round the fellow's neck and hang him upon this tree."

Several pairs of hands were already unbuckling the harness of the dead horse when De Vivonne pushed his way into the little group.

"It is as much as your lives are worth to touch him," said he.

"But he has slain Etienne Arnaud." "That score may be settled afterward. Tonight he is the king's messenger. Is the other all safe?"

"Yes, he is here."

him. Unbuckle the traces of the dead their way down three successive corrihorse. So! Now, De Carnac, put your own into the harness. You can mount the box and drive, for we have not them. Then they ascended a winding very far to go." The changes were rapidly made. thrust into a small square dungeon,

Amos Green was thrust in beside De and two trusses of straw were thrown Catinat, and the carriage was soon in after them. An instant later a toiling up the steep incline which it heavy key turned in the lock, and they had come down so precipitately. The were left to their own meditations. American had said not a word since | Very grim and dark those meditahis capture and had remained abso- tions were in the case of De Catinat. lutely stolid, with his hands crossed A stroke of good luck had made him over his chest while his fate was un- at court, and now this other of ill forder discussion. Now that he was alone tune had destroyed him. There were once more with his comrade, however, he frowned and muttered.

bled. "Why, an American horse would tector would they have in their have taken to the water like a duck. Once over the river, we should have had a clear lead to Paris."

"My dear friend." cried De Catinat. laying his mann ! I hands upon those as ly you have of his committee stood by me! Du low came you there? Never in my life have I been so astonished as when I saw your face."

Amos Green cluckled to himself. "I thought that maybe it would be a surprise to you if you knew who was driving you," said he. "When I was thrown from my horse I lay quiet, partly because it seemed to me to be more healthy to lie than to stand with all those swords clinking in my ears. Then they all got round you, and I rolled into the ditch, crept along it, got on the crossroad in the shadow of the trees and was beside the carriage before ever they knew that I was gone. I saw in a flash that there was only one way by which I could be of use to you. The coachman was leaning round, with his head turned, to see what was going on behind him. I out with my knife, sprang up on the front wheel and stopped his tongue."

"And then?" "I pulled him down into the ditch, and I got into his coat and his hat. I had hardly got the reins before they were all back and bundled you into the coach. I was not afraid of their seeing me, but I was scared lest I should not know which road to take, and so set them on the trail. But they made it easy to me by sending some of their riders in front, so I did well until I saw that by-track and made a run for

The guardsman again pressed his comrade's hands. "You have been as true to me as hilt to blade," said he. "It was a bold thought and a bold

"And what now?" asked the Ameri-

"I do not know who these men are, and I do not know whither they are taking us. I fancy that they are taking us to some place where they can shut us up until this business blows

"Well, they'll need to be smart about

"Why?" "Else maybe they won't find us when

hey want us."

"What do you mean?"

For answer the American, with a twist and a wriggle, drew his two hands apart and held them in front of his comrade's face.

"Bless you, it's the first thing they teach the papooses in an Indian wigwam! Put your hands out." With a few dexterous twists he loosened De Catinat's bonds until he also was able to slip his hands free. "Now for your feet, if you'll put them up. They'll find that we are easier to catch than to

But at that moment the carriage began to slow down, and the clank of the hoofs of the riders in front of them died suddenly away. Peeping through the windows, the prisoners saw a huge, stream showed where the ferryboat dark building stretching in front of them, so high and so broad that the belated travelers across. The driver night shrouded it in upon every side. never hesitated, but, gathering up the A great archway hung above them, reins, he urged the frightened crea- and the lamps shone on the rude woodtures into the river. They hesitated, en gate studded with ponderous clamps and nails. In the upper part of the door was a small square iron grating, and through this they could catch a glimpse of the gleam of a lantern and of a bearded face which looked out at them. De Vivonne, standing in his stirrups, craned his head up toward the grating, so that the two men most interested could hear little of the conversation which followed. They saw only that the horseman held a gold ring up in the air and that the face above, which had begun by shaking and frowning, was now nodding and smiling. An instant later the head disappeared, the door swung open upon screaming hinges, and the carriage drove on into the courtyard beyond, leaving the escort, with the exception of De Vivonne, outside. As the horses pulled up, a knot of rough fellows clustered round, and the two prisoners were dragged roughly out. In the light of the torches which flared around

them they could see that they were hemmed in by high turreted walls upon every side. A bulky man with a bearded face, the same whom they had seen at the grating, was standing in the center of the group of armed men issuing his orders.

"To the upper dungeon, Simon!" he cried. "And see that they have two bundles of straw and a loaf of bread until we learn our master's will."

"I know not who your master may be," said De Catinat, "but I would ask you by what warrant he dares to stop two messengers of the king while traveling in his service?"

"By St. Denis, if my master play the king a trick, it will be but tie and tie," the stout man answered, with a grin. "B't no more talk! Away with them. Simon, and you answer to me for their safe keeping."

It was in vain that De Catinat raved and threatened, invoking the most terrible menuces upon all who were concerned in detaining him. Two stout knaves thrusting him from behind and one dragging in front forced him through a narrow gate and along a "Tie this man and put him in beside stone flagged passage. They made dors and through three doors, each of which was locked and barred behind stone stair, and finally they were

his people in Paris, too-his sweet Adele, his old uncle, who had been as "Those infernal horses!" he grum- good as a father to him. What protroubles now that he had lost the power that might have shielded them? But his energetic comrade had yielded

to no feeling of despondency. The instant that the clang of the prison door bad assured him that he was safe MIS. Alex. Beggs & Sons from interruption he had felt all round the walls and flooring to see what manner of place this might be. His search had ended in the discovery of a small fireplace at one corner and of two great clumsy billets of wood, which seemed to have been left there to serve as pillows for the prisoners. Having satisfied himself that the chimney was so small that it was utterly impossible to pass even his head up it, he drew the two blocks of wood over on tiptoe on the highest to reach the bars which guarded it. Drawing himthey had just quitted. The carriage and De Vivonne were passing out through the gate as he looked, and he heavy door and the clatter of hoofs from the troop of horsemen outside. The seneschal and his retainers had disappeared; the torches, too, were gone, and, save for the measured tread of a pair of sentinels in the yard twenty feet beneath him, all was silent throughout the great castle.

The window was large enough to pass his body through if it were not for those bars. He shook them and hung his weight upon them, but they were as thick as his thumb and firmly welded; then, getting some strong hold for his other foot, he supported himself by one hand, while he picked with his knife at the setting of the iron. It was cement, as smooth as glass and as hard as marble. His knife turned when he tried to loosen it. But there was still the stone. It was sandstone, not so very hard. If he could cut grooves in it he might be able to draw out bars, cement and all. He sprang down to the floor again and was thinking how he should best set to work when a groan drew his attention to his

companion. "Something on your mind?" said Amos Green, sitting down upon his billets of wood. "What was it, then?" The guardsman here made a movement of impatience. "What was it? How can you ask me when you know as well as I do the wretched failure of my mission? It was the king's wish that the archbishop should marry them. The archbishop should have been at the palace by now. Ah, I can see the king's cabinet, I can see him waiting, I can see madame waiting, I can hear them speak of the unhappy De Catinat"-

"I see all that," said the American stolidly, "and I see something more." "What then?"

"I see the archbishop tying them up together. " "He could not be at the palace."

"On the contrary, he reached the palace about half an hour ago." De Catinat sprang to his feet. At the

palace!" he screamed. "Then who gave him the message?" "I did," said Amos Green.

If the American had expected to surprise or delight his companion by this curt announcement he was woefully disappointed, for De Catinat approached him with a face which was full of sympathy and trouble.

"My dear friend," said he, "I have been selfish and thoughtless. That fall from your horse has shaken you more than you think. Lie down upon this straw and see if a little sleep may

"I tell you that the bishop is there!" cried Amos Green.

"He is, he is," said De Catinat soothingly. "He is most certainly there. I See our folding roof and fire escape trust that you have no pain?"

The American raved in the air with his knotted fists. "You think that I'm crazed," he cried, "and, by the eternal, you are enough to make me so! When I say that I sent the bishop I mean that I saw to the job. You remember when I stepped back to your friend the major?"

To be continued.

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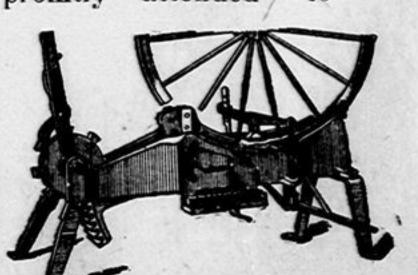
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