

QUIXARVYN'S RIVAL

The battle of Seidgenoor had been fought and lost. Night had come again, and in the old gray church of Weston Zealand 500 of the beaten rebels lay imprisoned. The scene inside the church was awful in its weird impressiveness. It might have been a gorge of the lost souls in the Inferno. The lurid glare of a few torches which were stuck at intervals against the pillars revealed the forms of men sitting and lying on the seats and floor in every attitude of dejection and despair. Up and down the aisles the iron shod heels of the sentries rang upon the pavement. The greater part of the prisoners were silent, or only moaning with the pain of recent wounds; some were praying; one was singing, mad with terror. And, in truth, he and his companions had good cause for fear, for their conqueror was Feversham, the General of the Royalist, whose only mode of dealing with a rebel was to hang or shoot him without more ado, and who was only waiting for the daybreak to begin the work of slaughter. A few only kept their resolution—among them two who were sitting together in the shadow of the pulpit steps. Both these men had been conspicuous in the fight, and both knew well that they must die at daybreak. The elder of the two was a man of about 35, with powerful thick set frame, and strong rugged features; a bad man to be against one, one might say. He was by trade a horse breaker, and a great part of his business was to break in the wild colts of the marsh. His companion was six or eight years younger. His figure was tall and slight, but finely made, and his face was singularly handsome. He was the swiftest runner in the West of England, perhaps in the whole kingdom. His name was David Dare; that of the elder man was John Quixarvyn. Both were natives of the town of Axbridge, but, until the day before, they had been strangers to each other. Chance had made them comrades in the contest, where they had fought side by side and where the same troop of Royalists had seized them both. The two were silent. Quixarvyn had pulled out a short black pipe, and filled and lighted it and was now smoking tranquilly. His companion had also pulled out something from his breast, but it was not a pipe, it was the portrait of a beautiful young girl. He took a long look at the lovely face, a look which said farewell. Quixarvyn watched him. In the dim light in which they sat he could not see the features of the portrait, but he guessed how the case stood. "Poor fellow," he said, with more tenderness than would have been expected from his looks. Then, after a minute's silence, he went on, as much to himself as to the other, "And yet my case is harder. I was in love—I am in love, God help me!—and I also have her portrait in my breast. What would I give if I could look on it as you can look on yours!" Dare looked at him with interest. "What?" he said, "have you also the same trouble—a poor girl who will go distracted when she hears of what has happened to you?" "Yes," said the other bitterly; "she will not go distracted; she had enough of me, and I shall have the pain of dying unrevenged upon the knave who robbed me of her." It was strange to see how in a moment his eyes had grown ablaze with passion. The young man looked at him in astonishment. "Who was it?" he inquired. "Who was it?" echoed the other. "Do you think I knew that that I should now have cause to write at dying without crying quits with him? No, I do not know him. I only know she loved me, that she cooled toward me, that when I asked her plainly whether she had found a younger and a better looking man she confessed that it was true and threw herself upon my generosity to set her free from our engagement. I did so—in a frenzy of mad passion. But when I asked her for his name she would not tell me, fearing, I dare say, that I might twist his neck. I should soon have found him, but then this war broke out and in my rage I could not keep myself from rushing to the fight to cool my blood with blows. And so here I am—going to be shot at daybreak. But I swear to heaven if I only had that fellow in my power for one brief minute I could die contented." "You are right," said the other; "I should feel the same." Quixarvyn drew a portrait from his breast and held it out to his companion. "Look," he said, "is this a face to jilt a man? though it is one to drive him crazy. Let me look at yours—it is not more innocent than this one, I dare swear." The young man took the portrait and at the same time handed him his own. Each looked in silence at the portrait in his hand—in a silence of amazement, of stupefaction. The two portraits represented the same person! Quixarvyn was the first to break the silence. "What!" he said, drawing a deep breath and bursting into a low laugh, which was both fierce and glad, "you was it? To think that I have found you after all! Fate is kinder to me than I fancied." The other returned his gaze. "Well," he said, "it was I, it appears; though I never knew it, nor suspected it. And," he added simply, "it has been no one's fault." "No one's fault?" "No, no one's. Mary Seldon liked you, but she did not love you, and when we met she found out her mistake. You frightened her with your mad humors. Without mentioning your name she told me the whole story. You could not make her happy, and I could; that's the whole case. Do you blame her?" "No," said Quixarvyn, thrusting the portrait back into his breast. "I don't. But I have sworn to be equal with the man who turned her mind against me—I will never believe he acted by fair means—and I am going to do it. Defend yourself; I give you warning." Both men sprang to their feet at the same instant, and stood glaring at each other. At that moment there was heard outside the church the rattle of a drum. Only the rattle of a drum. But the sound struck them motionless as figures turned to stone. Nor was the effect on their companions less remarkable. There was a moment's silence in the church, deep as the silence of the dead; then a move, ment—a long thrill of horror. That sum-

mon meant that day was breaking, and that their hour was come. The guards set instantly to work to prepare the first batch of prisoners to be led out of the church. Dare and Quixarvyn were among the first seized. With about a dozen others they were marched into the open air. The gray dawn was scarcely giving way to the first streaks of sunrise as they passed out of the churchyard gates; but the whole village was wide awake and in a tumult of excitement; indeed, there had been little sleep that night. Every window was alive with terror-stricken gazers as the party of doomed men, surrounded by a band of soldiers, were hurried through the narrow streets and out upon the open moor. At the border of the moor sat an officer on horseback, surrounded by a troop of soldiers. Here the party halted and the guards saluted. The officer was a man of about 40, whose dandified appearance, which was as trim as that of a toy soldier newly painted, showed oddly in the midst of soldiers stained with battle. This was Lord Feversham—a man in whose nature vanity, callousness and love of pleasure were about equally combined. His face was gay with pleasant expectation as the rebels were drawn up before him. "Good!" he remarked. "These were all ringleaders, were they? Sergeant John, draw up your firing party and shoot down every man of them." The order was instantly obeyed. The firing party was drawn up, the prisoners were ranged in line at a few paces distance. At one extremity of the line David Dare and John Quixarvyn found themselves once more side by side. An officer who sat on horseback at Feversham's right hand observed him. "I know those two," he said, pointing to them with his finger. "Pity! No such fellows should be done for. One of them is the best runner in the country side, and the other the best rider." "Eh? What?" said Feversham, standing up in his stirrups. "Hid! there a moment, sergeant; I spy a chance of gallant sport. What say you, Major?—a race between these two across the moor, the one on foot, the other mounted. Will you back the runner?" The Major was a man of some humanity. He reflected for a moment. "Agreed," he said, "and to insure that both shall do their best let the winner have the promise of his life." Feversham received this proposal with no means a good grace, for to spare a rebel hurt him to the soul. But the joyful prospect of seeing two men racing for their lives, and of being able, after all, to shoot the loser at length reconciled him to the scheme. He gave his orders and the two prisoners were led out of the line. Out upon the moor, about a quarter of a mile away, stood a solitary tree. This was selected as the starting point. A double line of troopers was drawn up stretching from the tree to the spot where the General was stationed, leaving a space between them like a racetrack some yards wide. At the end of the course Feversham and the Major sat opposite each other. Whichever of the two competitors should pass between them first would be rewarded with his life and liberty. And what were the sensations of the pair while these preparations were in progress? David Dare, standing before the muskets of the firing party, had heard the strange proposal with a sudden thrill of hope, so keen that it was almost like a pain. Then for a moment his heart fell again. He knew his own speed of foot, but he knew also that against a fleet horse urged by a skillful rider spurring for dear life his chance was likely to be small. Still there was hope again, and he could do his best. Mere he could not do, though success meant life—and life! Mary Seldon. At the last thought his eyes glistened, and he moved up the course between his guards with the keenness of a hound in leash. In the meantime a trooper had dismounted, and Quixarvyn, armed with whip and spurs, having taken his place in the saddle, the horse was led by a soldier to the starting point. Unlike his rival, Quixarvyn's face showed no elation. For one moment, on hearing the proposal, a gleam had come into his eyes, but now he rode with down bent head, as if lost in thought. A sentence seemed to be constantly running in his head—the sentence used by Dare in their quarrel in the church—"You could not make her happy, and I could." He muttered the words over twenty times. It was not until the tree was reached and the horse was halted with his head toward the spot where Feversham, discernible far off between the lines, sat waiting, that he started, roused himself, and looked about him. David Dare was standing on his right, stripped to the waist and without his shoes, ready for the start's signal. Quixarvyn's guards dropped the horse's bridle; and Sergeant John, who stood between the two competitors, drew a pistol from his belt to give the signal. The excitement at that moment was intense. Not a sound was heard in the still morning air, but all down the double lines were faces fixed intently on the two competitors. Feversham and the Major, with glasses at their eyes, sat motionless as statues. Even the condemned men, forgetful of their own approaching doom, stretched their necks to catch a glimpse of the strange contest on which depended life and death for two of their companions. The sergeant raised his pistol. The report rang out. At the same instant horse and man shot out together from the mark. At first the runner, practised in flying from the start, and having less momentum than the horse, drew out in front. In a few seconds he was some twenty yards ahead. Then the gap between them ceased to widen; then it was seen to be decreasing; the horse was gaining—slowly at first, but gaining surely, stride by stride. When half the course was covered the horse had drawn up level—and then came such a race as had never yet been seen. For a hundred yards and more the two ran locked together, side by side, the runner flying over the crisp turf, the horse stretched out in a fierce gallop, with the rider standing in the stirrups. And now the goal was fifty yards away; but the gazers drew a deep breath as they saw that now the horse was gaining—was drawing out in front. For one instant it seemed that all was over; the next, to their amazement, they were conscious that the horse was falling. Then they saw a gallant sight; they saw the runner nerve himself for a last effort, and close upon the goal, dash past the horse

and past the judges and fall headlong on the turf. At that scene, in spite of discipline, a frantic cheer broke forth along the line. Even Feversham himself smiled grimly, as one who, though he had just lost a bet, had gained its full equivalent in pleasurable excitement. The winner, who had fallen panting and exhausted, was raised into a sitting posture by two troopers, one of whom poured a draught of brandy down his throat. The spirit almost instantly revived him, and in a few seconds he was able, though still weak and dizzy, to stand upon his feet and look about him. A few paces off his beaten rival stood beside his horse. Dare looked at him, and their eyes met. Quixarvyn's face bore an almost imperceptible smile; but it was not this, but something in his look which the other could not have defined, which struck him backward like a shock. He staggered back a pace or two, bewildered by the light which broke upon his mind. Then he stepped up to his rival's side, and the guards, who saw no cause to interfere, falling back a little, he put his mouth close to Quixarvyn's ear: "You pulled that horse!" he said. Quixarvyn looked at him, but answered not a word. "You let me win," the other went on, his voice breaking. "For her sake you did it." Quixarvyn drove his nails into his palms; he had acted, he was acting, not without a bitter cost. "Make her happy," he said, briefly. As he spoke he turned away and strode swiftly to his old position at the head of the line of prisoners, before which the firing party was again drawn up. Dare turned his back upon the scene and hid his fingers in his ears. Nevertheless, he could still hear with horrible distinctness the Sergeant's loud, clear voice, with an interval between the words— "Ready!" "Present!" Almost as the word was given came the crash of the report. Moved by an impulse which he could not conquer he turned around with a shudder. The soldiers were lowering their smoking muskets, and a thick white cloud hung above the line of prisoners stretched upon the ground. At the extremity of the line Quixarvyn lay upon his face, with his right hand clenched upon a portrait which he had taken from his breast, and a bullet through his heart. —Strand Magazine.

That Night. You and I, and that night, with his perfume and glory! The scent of the locusts—the light of the moon: And the violin weaving the waltzes a story, Eumeshing their feet in the web of the tune, Till their shadows uncertain Revolved round on the curtain, While under the trellis we drank in the June. Spoked through with the midnight, the cedars were their shadowy tresses outlined in the bright crystal, moon-smitten mist, where the fountain's heart is singing. Forever, forever burst, full with delight; And the rose at your throat was a nest of spines; Fell faint as that near it. Your love like a lily blows out in the night. O, your glove was an odorous sachet of blisses! O, your glove was an odorous sachet of blisses! And the rose at your throat was a nest of spines; Kisses—!—in face—!—I hear it today, As I sit here, confessing Our secret, and blessing My rival who found us, and warned you away! —James Whitcomb Riley.

A Girl's Real Sweetheart. I do believe in sweethearts, I do believe in the right of every girl to have one, and I do believe that when he is the real sweetheart he will soon be the one who will be your husband, whose joy it will be to care for you, whose happiness it will be to see you happy. It is a pretty word, that old-fashioned one, "sweetheart." It seems to me always to suggest the great white, sweet-smelling rose that grows in out-of-door gardens and which has reached perfection because the sun of love has made it blossom, and the rain of disappointment has made the sun seem brighter, the flower harder and more eager in hoping. That is what I think a sweetheart is. He loves you through the sunny days, and he is your consolation when the dark ones come. He is a man who in honoring you respects all those belonging to you. And because he is your sweetheart he is going to try and not let you make any mistakes, and you will be a very foolish girl if you don't listen to his advice. So many of my girls have got sweethearts that I want to have this little talk with them.—Ladies' Home Journal.

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