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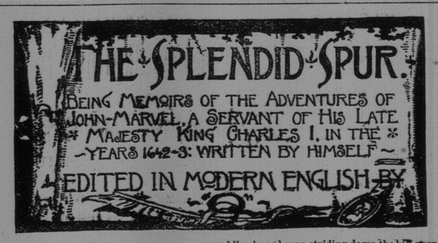

SYNOPSIS.

The story is laid in the days preceding the downfall of Charles I. of England. Jack Marvel is intrusted with the King's letter by a guardsman, Master Anthony Killigrew, who has been ambushed by a bully and cutlier, Jake Settle. He leaves Oxford on his journey, and gets safely outside the gates. Meets on his journey Sir Deakin Killigrew, father of the murdered man, and his daughter Delia. They have violent experience with robbers and Sir Deakin dies. Jack Marvel and Delia decide to continue their journey together. Marvel is taken prisoner, but escapes. He and Delia are now pursued by a Royalist ship. They arrive on the Cornish coast, and again meet with Settle and his band. Delia is seized, and Jack springs upon his old horse, Molly. Molly carries Jack safely down into Temple. Just as he is sinking from fatigue and loss of blood Joan of Tor comes to his rescue.

CHAPTER 12—On Marvel's recovery from a long swoon Joan, an ignorant moorland girl of great native intelligence and courage, tells him how she insured his safety by fooling the pursuing troopers. She takes the king's letter, learns the message she is to deliver, and presses on to warn the Cornish forces of the advance of Stamford and Essex. Jack views the fight on Braddock Down from near the hut in which he hides, Joan rushes in at nightfall, naked sword in hand. "Church and King" had won.

CHAPTER 13.—Joan and Marvel go to Bodmin fair and there meet Sir Bernard Hesmali of Lincolnshire, steward of Gleys. "Steward of Sir Deakin Killigrew that was?" On returning to Temple Joan's drunken father is discovered dead in the hovel. They bury him.

CHAPTER 14.—Marvel visits Gleys, and in Tingcomb recognizes the person who agreed with Settle for the murder of Anthony Killigrew at Oxford. He forces a written confession from the old man and rides away.

CHAPTER XV.

I LEAVE JOAN AND RIDE TO THE WARS.

You may guess how I felt at being thus properly fooled. And the worst was I could see no way to mend it, for against the barricado between us I might have beat myself wal nigh so smooth and high that, even by standing on Molly's back, I could not—by a foot or more—reach the top to pull myself over.

There was nothing for it but to turn homewards down the hill, which I did, chewing the cud of my folly and finding it bitter as gall.

Joan was not in the kitchen when I arrived, nor about the buildings, nor yet could I spy her anywhere moving on the hills. So, after calling to her once or twice, I stabled the mare and set off up the tor side to seek her.

Now I must tell you that since the day of my coming I had made many attempts to find the place where Joan had then hidden me, and always fruitlessly, though I knew well whereabouts it must be. Indeed, I had thought at first I had only to walk straight to the hole, yet found after repeated trials but solid earth and bowlders for my pains.

But today, as I climbed past the spot, something very bright flashed in my eyes and dazzled me; and rubbing them and looking I saw a great hole in the hill—facing to the southwest—in the very place I had searched for it, and out of this a beam of light glancing.

Creeping near on tip toe I found one huge block of granite, that before had seemed bedded among a dozen fellow bowlders against the turf—the base resting on another well nigh as big—was now rolled back, having been fixed to work smoothly on a pivot, yet in like nature that no eye, but by chance, could detect it. Now, who in the beginning designed this hiding place I leave you to consider, and whether it was the Jews or Phoenicians—nations, I am told, that once worked the hills around for tin. But inside 'twas curiously paved and lined with slabs of granite, the specks of ore in which, I noted, were the points of light that had once puzzled me. And here was Joan's bower and Joan herself inside it.

She was sitting with her back to me, in her left hand holding up the mirror, that caught the rays of the now sinking sun (and thus had dazzled me), while with her right she twirled her hair into a rope of light. Now, as I stood in the entrance, my shadow fell across the floor, and she looking up, saw it, and, with a cry, leaped to her feet and ran to me, her hair falling down in a great golden cloak behind her, and her face—for the mirror had fallen—all aglow with the reflected sunset.

"Jack!" she cried, and I felt her hands on my shoulders, and her face was upturned to mine, and I saw the light in her eyes, and the tremulous smile on her lips, and the color in her cheeks, and I knew that I was a fool.

"Jack!" she cried again