POOR DOCUMENT

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The Coming of The King.

BY JOSEPH HOCKING.

Author of "All Men Are Liars," "The Flame of Fire," Etc.

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CHAPTER XVII—(Continued).

For a week London Town was a scene of constant gaiety, for although the great rejoicing took place on the day when the king rode into London, it took the people a full week to settle down to the ordinary course of life. The playhouses which Oliver Cromwell had closed were all open, while seemingly all traces of the old Puritan life which had grown up under the great Protector were swept away in a day. Laws were relaxed, and the old stern system of morals was not only broken, but laughed at as unworthy of a free people.

It was not until the fourth day after I had come back to London that I heard it declared that Master Leslie's daughter had escaped from prison, and that in spite of every endeavor to discover her hiding-place, she had not been found. It was said, moreover, that her escape had been brought around by a friend of Master Leslie's, who had succeeded in putting a sleeping potion in the drink of the gaolers, and had thus succeeded in his plans.

As may be imagined, this news caused me great satisfaction, most because Mistress Constance was still at liberty, but also because no shadow of suspicion rested upon me. The latter conviction was, however, rudely shaken when at the end of a week I was told that two men had been at the Virgin Queen inquiring after me.

"What were they like?" I asked of Caleb Bullen, who I knew was my faithful friend.

"They were gaily attired, Master Roland. They wore swords by their sides, and long feathers in their caps."

"And you took them to be men of quality?"

"Ay, I should judge so," replied Caleb thoughtfully. "They swore much, talked much, laughed much, and drank much wine, so I judged they were of gentle blood. They mentioned great names with much freedom, and seemed to know of all that was going on at Court."

"But what did they say?"

"They asked whether Master Roland Rashcliffe was living at the Virgin Queen; whereupon I answered that you did, and that you were a good customer, seeing you ate your victuals, drank your ale, and paid your count without grumbling. Then they asked how long you had been staying here, and I told them since the day of the coming of the king. Upon that they said they would call again this evening at 6 by the clock, and would I tell you that they would deem it polite of you not to go out at that hour, as they would come on an affair of importance?"

This, as may be imagined, set me to pondering gravely, but after careful consideration, and asking Caleb Bullen many questions, I came to the conclusion that they could have nought to do with the folks at Bedford. I determined, therefore, that I would be in the inn at the time mentioned, wondering all the time what they wanted of me.

The clock of St. Paul's Cross had scarcely chimed 6 when I saw two young men, dressed with much richness, and carrying themselves with a jaunty air, enter the hall of the inn.

"Hath Master Rashcliffe yet arrived?" one asked of Caleb Bullen.

"Ay," replied mine host, pointing to me, whereupon with a great show of ceremony they came to me.

"Master Roland Rashcliffe," said the elder of the two.

"I am Roland Rashcliffe," I replied, looking at them closely, for I was not yet free from fears that they had heard something of my doings at Bedford.

"We bring you greeting, Master Rashcliffe, and if it would cause you no trouble we would see you alone in a place where we can speak without interruption."

I therefore led the way into a room where such quietness could be found, and then, having bid them sit down near the window, I was able to get a better view of them. They were both young men, not, as I judged, more than thirty years of age, and I was not long in coming to the conclusion that Caleb Bullen had judged rightly when he said they were men of quality. Both were very richly attired in the kind of finery which came into vogue directly the king returned, and as though, as I judged, both had been drinking much wine, they carried their wine well, and showed no sign of loss of sense.

"We hear you were at Dover when His Majesty landed, Master Rashcliffe, and that you impressed him favorably. It is better to be born lucky than rich, for, by my soul, His Majesty hath had so many hangers on since he entered his faithful London, that none of us, save a very few of his chosen ones, can get more than a nod or a wave of his hand."

"I was indeed in Dover," I replied, "and a gay sight it was."

"The king spoke graciously to you, we heard."

"I was fortunate beyond my deserts."

"Ah, say not so, say not so. Corks will swim, and those whom the Gods favor will obtain the smile of kings. We are even now here on an errand which, if it means not royal favor, is so near to it that a man can scarcely distinguish it from such."

Again I examined them closely, and tried to guess from whence they came and who sent them.

"Ah, but we have come here like a couple of grooms," the spokesman of the two went on. "But forgive us, Master Rashcliffe. Manners, like everything else, need constant practice, and since these dissenters and Puritans have ruled the land, there hath been no opportunity of showing courtesy due from one gentleman to another. To such a state hath these rascally psalm-singing knaves brought us. Let me say, then, that the name of my friend here is the Honorable John Burleigh, youngest son of Lord Burleigh, while I am Stanley Carew, son of Sir William Carew, of Cornwall."

I bowed ceremoniously, even as they had done when they told me their names.

Upon this Master Stanley Carew looked around the room as though some one was in hiding; then, upon being assured that we were alone, he went on—

"We have come to you from one of royal blood, Master Rashcliffe, with royal commands."

"From the king?" I asked.

"Nay, not from the king, that is exactly, but doubtless this letter will explain much to you."

I took the letter, and noted that the paper was emblazoned with the Royal Arms. It contained only these words: "Master Roland Rashcliffe is commanded to appear before us tonight at Whitehall at the hour of eight."

The signature I could not at first make out, but on closer scrutiny I discovered it to be signed by James, Duke of York. On lifting my eyes from the paper, I saw that both my visitors were looking eagerly towards me, as though they would make out what had been written to me, but, knowing so little of them, I folded the missive and put it beneath my doublet.

"Doubtless you have received pleasant news, Master Rashcliffe?" said Master Carew with a meaning smile.

"News from those in high places should always be pleasant," I replied.

"By the saints, no. And truly by the look on your face I judge that joy doth not overcome you, Master Rashcliffe. Well, what then? A man of wit must even use it to his own advantage. Moreover, doubtless the message is of importance, seeing we were charged to deliver it into no hands but your own. Is there aught in the way of information we can give you, Master Rashcliffe?"

Now this set me thinking. It became plain to me that they knew not the contents of the letter; moreover, I judged that they sought to obtain information concerning it, and thereby obtain power which they hoped would be useful.

"No," I replied, "I do not know that there are any questions that I desire to ask."

I saw the two exchange glances as I spoke, but Master Carew went on quite glibly. Then we shall have naught to do but take back your answer, Master Rashcliffe."

"Were you requested to take back an answer?" I queried.

"For that matter, no, I do not think we were; still, we thought you would doubtless desire to send a fitting answer."

"As I understand it, no reply is needed, Master Carew," I replied. "Nevertheless I thank you for bringing me the letter, which I will take deeply to heart."

After this they stayed some time, trying by many means to let drop some hint concerning what they had brought me. But I deemed it best to keep a still tongue, and when they presently left me, looking as I thought not over pleased with the success of their visit, I called to mind that I had said nothing which could in any way advantage them.

Nevertheless, the letter gave me much food for anxious thought. Why should the brother of the king desire to see me? To answer this I cast my mind over my adventures since I had left my father's house, but only one event led me to connect the Duke of York with them. That, as may be remembered, was the speech of Master Rickmore and Master Hamilton on the night when I had been dragged from my horse when riding from Canterbury to London. I called to mind the words of the man Hamilton, who related to the other what he said Duke James had said to him. "By the Holy Virgin get hold of the young rascal. Never let him out of your sight until you have obtained all he hath found, and know all he can tell you."

For a long time I sat thinking of this, and of many other things in relation thereto, and the more I thought the more was I convinced that I ran no little risk in obeying the Duke of York's command. On the other hand, I could see that it would not be wise to refuse. The king's brother was next to the king himself, and if the story of Lucy Walters was false was the next heir to the throne. To refuse his commands, therefore, would be nearly as bad as refusing those of the king himself. It would moreover arouse suspicion, and might possibly lead to many unpleasant results.

But more than all this, I longed much to know what the duke would say to me. I desired to find out the motives which prompted him to send for me. I had not fear danger—thoughtless youth seldom apprehends that—but I did ardently wish to discover what was in Duke James' mind.

The clock of St. Paul's struck the hour of seven. I had not therefore a minute to spare. It was half an hour's walk from St. Paul's Cross to Whitehall, so I went to my bedchamber to bedeck myself in the best finery I possessed, and ere long I was passing Fleet prison, on my way to Whitehall.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The clocks of Westminster were striking seven as I drew near the place I had been bidden to come in Whitehall. My heart beat fast at thought of what might happen to me, and of the commands which might be laid upon me, yet did I go on without faltering, for the more I wondered at the happening the more did I desire to know why I was commanded thither. The clock had barely ceased striking when a hand was laid upon my shoulder.

"Master Roland Rashcliffe," a voice whispered in my ear.

"That is my name," I replied, and turning I saw a man of grave demeanour, and of somewhat sad countenance.

"Follow me. Ask no questions, and make no protest at aught you may see."

This he also said in a whisper, and although I obeyed him I liked not the secrecy of the business. As I passed along I noticed that many people were around, and that all seemed to be in gay humor and in gay attire. Truly the coming of the king had made a difference in London town. The whole city seemed to be given over to pleasure, and none of that solemn decorum which marked it a year before was now manifest.

We had not gone far when we left Whitehall and entered the park which lies behind. Here also were the same scenes of gaiety. Indeed, never had I seen so many gaily-dressed women in my life before. The park was in the summer of its loveliness, flowers bloomed on all sides, the trees were in well-nigh full leaf, the birds sang, while gay laughter, both among men and women, was to be heard continually. My companion paid no heed to any of these things, however. He strode quickly along, stopped at the door of one of the houses, and a minute later I stood behind him in one of the great houses. Without hesitation he led the way upstairs, and without ceremony entered a large room. As far as I could judge it had been lately fitted up, for the things I saw were new, and shone with much splendour. Nevertheless, it did not look like a residence, but rather appeared to be a place where a man of authority might gather his friends around him. No one was in the room, and although it stood so near to Whitehall the utmost silence reigned, except that I thought that I heard whispering voices in an adjoining compartment.

"Do not dare to oppose him," said the man who accompanied me; "assent to all his commands, agree with all he saith, although your judgment will lead you otherwise. Above all be silent as death afterwards. Remember, he hath no mercy."

"You speak of the Duke of York?"

"I speak of the next king," he replied. "Therefore, do as I bid you, and be wise. Be surprised at nothing you may hear, even if he saith things that should not be heard by such a youth as you."

He had scarcely finished speaking when two men entered the room. The one was the Duke of York; I had seen him ride away in the king's coach by the side of the king when he left Dover. His appearance, as I thought, was changed. I thought then that he was, although of somewhat austere countenance, pleasant to look upon. That night he looked angry and cruel. His face was heavy, and, if I mistook not, besotted, but whether he had been partaking freely of wine I could not tell. His companion's face was hidden, and although I thought I detected something familiar in his gait, I knew not who he was.

"This is the youth?"

"It is, your Grace."

The duke looked at me sternly and silently, as though he would read my heart, and although I dared to lift my eyes to his but once, I thought his eyes were bloodshot.

Having seated himself, he bade me come near to him.

"Master Roland Rashcliffe?" he said.

"Yes, your Grace," I replied.

"Tell me, boy, is your father an honest man?"

The question was asked abruptly, as though he would take me unawares.

"He fought for your father," I replied.

"So did many a knave, until he thought he would gain by joining the rebels."

At this I was silent.

"Why did he send thee to find out if there was any truth in the lying story that His Majesty married the wench Lucy Walters?"

"To discover the truth," I replied, for it seemed to me at that moment as though there were naught else to say.

At this he laughed, but the laugh was cruel, and never did I hear a man's voice that had less mirth in it.

"Well, what have you found?" he said presently. "You left your home many days ago. You went to Folkestone, from thence you made a midnight journey to a lonely house. Tell me how you fared, and what trophies you possess as a result of your valor."

At this I was silent, for in truth never did words appear more dangerous than at this moment.

"How now, sirrah! You do not speak!"

King's brother though he was, he made me angry, and I resented the tones he used towards me.

"What, you do not answer me? Know you that you do wrong in making me angry? I tell you it would be an easy matter to put another in the already flowing prisons of England, and so I bid you beware. What did you discover at the lonely house, and what did you bring away?"

"You should already know, your Grace," I replied boldly, for by this time all my fear of him had gone. Perhaps my anger had driven it away. If it had, it were no wonder, for had I been a lackey he could not have spoken with less courtesy, while the thickness of his voice, and rheumy eyes, made me feel sure that he had been drinking heavily.

"What mean you, young malapert?" he asked.

"I mean that I was attacked by men who used your name when riding to London," I answered; "that they dragged me from my horse, and searched me to the skin. If I had possessed aught they would surely have brought it to you."

At this I was in doubt as to what course he would take. I saw his blood mount to his cheek, and anger gleam from his eyes, while he lifted his hand as if he would strike me. But this was only for a moment. Instead of yielding to anger he burst into a great laugh, as though he had heard a good joke.

"Ha, ha!" he cried, "you discovered that you could do naught without its discovery, eh? You discovered that the royal arm can strike far, eh? You learnt that you cannot hunt in royal domains without being bitten by the keeper's dogs? Is that not so, my young springald?"

"The king's brother is not the king," I cried, for now I saw that unless I would place myself entirely in his power I must take a bold course.

"What mean you?" he cried.

"I mean that when I have discovered aught that affects the king, I will bear my message to the king," I replied, "but, until then, I will hold my peace as a man should."

"I have a good mind to send you to the dungeons."

"If you did I should soon be a free man again," I replied.

"And how is that?"

"The king would soon hear that his brother threw a youth into prison because that youth knew something that affected the king's honor," I replied. "And the king, on hearing of this, would demand to see him, and he would tell His Majesty many things."

"Tut, tut, youth," he said, still gazing at me curiously. "Do you think because you have answered me pertly that you have answered me wisely, and do not imagine that although a man doth not wear a crown he hath no power. Oh, I see how it is. You were carried away by what you saw when the king came to London. You saw the London Corporation do His Majesty homage at St. George in the Fields, you saw the streets all flaunting with bunting, you beheld the twelve hundred velvet-coated lackeys, the footmen in purple, and buff, and silver, and green, and blue; you heard the trumpets sounding, the people shouting, and the clergy waiting to do homage to their most gracious and Protestant king. I say, you saw all this, while they took no notice of the heir-apparent. But it is not always the man who wears the crown who reigns. Take our brother, Louis, across the water. He wore the crown while a priest reigned. It was so before him. Louis XIII, the man who was always tired, wore the crown, but Richelieu ruled the land. But wait a little, Mazarin will die, and then a change will come. Let me tell you something, young malapert. It is the man with will and brains who reigns, whether he be the king or the king's brother. Moreover, it is he who is not too much given over to pleasure, and who holds the true faith."

"Have a care, your Grace, have a care," said the man who had accompanied me hither, for he saw by this time I was assured of, that the king's brother had partaken of much wine.

"Have a care for whom?" said the duke angrily. "Am I to be bearded by a boy? Look you here, and remember," and his voice was thick as he spoke, "the king's brother can bestow benefits as well as the king, remember that, and the king's brother can reward those who are faithful. Besides, the man who is only the king's brother today may be king next year. Never forget. And think of something else. A man need not be anointed by a bishop to alter a country's laws. Hath any law been passed against the Presbyterians or Primitives or Dissenters? What saith the king? 'Justice to all.' Yet even at this time hundreds of Presbyterians and Puritans have been ousted from their pulpits, while Independents and Baptists crowd our gaols. Who hath done this? 'Oh, no man hath done it,' is the reply. It is all because the Episcopalians believe that now Charles Stuart is come back they can e'en send the others apacking. But who shall say they have heard no word from James Stuart?"

"Your Grace! Your Grace!"

"Ay, cannot a man speak his own mind? This boy is not a fool, and will know how to be discreet. And now I have a word more to say. Have you, Master Roland Rashcliffe, discovered aught concerning this supposed marriage contract between the king and Lucy Walters?"

"Yes," I replied, before I was well aware, and for which word I was ready to bite my tongue out.

"You have seen it?" and I noticed that he spoke more clearly, as though my news had sharpened his wits.

"I have seen that which purports to be what you inquire after," I replied.

Never did I see a man change more suddenly. He seemed to throw off the effects of wine in an instant.

"You have seen it? Where?"

At this I was silent, for I felt not like giving away my secret.

"Speak, Roland, I command you."

I started, for it was my father's voice which I had heard, and then I knew that it was he who had entered the room with the duke, and who had hidden his face from me.

"Father!" I cried.

"Ay, it is I, Roland, and it is I who command you to tell his Grace what he desires to know. I have told him nothing because I have seen nothing, but it is my will that you tell him what you have seen."

My father's presence set me wondering greatly. As I have said, I had not seen him since my return to London, and now to discover that he had been in communication with the king's brother staggered me. Rightly or wrongly, I concluded that he could gain no hearing with His Majesty, and so had sought an audience with the duke.

"Remember," said the duke, "this story is lies from end to end. Yet I do not say that some one hath not forged such a contract. Moreover, if such a contract, although it is as valueless as the paper on which it is written, were to pass from hand to hand, it would set gossips' tongues wagging, and perchance unhinge affairs of state. You say you have seen this. Where have you seen it?"

(To be continued.)

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INFANT MORTALITY LARGE IN CAPE BRETON.

Glace Bay Has 300 Cases of Cholera Infantum—Sydney Death Rate Heavy—Impure Water One of the Causes.

Sydney, Aug. 19—(Special)—The infant mortality in the town of Glace Bay during the past few months has been exceptionally high. There are now upwards of 300 cases of cholera infantum there, eleven deaths resulting there last week.

In Sydney there are a large number of cases and the mortality among infants is also high. The cause of the prevalence of sickness at Glace Bay is thought to be due to impure water and poor sanitary conditions.

UNKNOWN MAN KILLED ON I. C. R. NEAR HALIFAX

Halifax, Aug. 22—(Special)—The Sydney flyer which arrived tonight ran over an unknown man between Bedford and Windsor Junction about 11.30 tonight. The body was horribly mangled.

The train stopped, picked up the body and brought it to the city. The victim appeared to be a man about 45 years of age but there was nothing on the body to identify it. He was walking in the centre of the track.

FATAL ACCIDENT TO WESTMORLAND MAN.

Moncton, Aug. 19—At Barachois, near Shediac, yesterday, Leonie Legere, aged 20, was out shooting in a boat alone and on returning to shore started to pull the boat up. The boat striking the shore discharged the gun and the entire charge lodged in his side. He died last night.

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STOESSELL SENDS GRIM FAREWELL

(Continued from page 1.)

in the balance. The Chinese just arrived, who bring the latest information from Port Arthur, were employed by the Russian authorities carrying the dead on the field and also ammunition, which they say is plentiful. They confirm the statement that the Liata promontory was not assailed for the reason that it is impregnable from the sea side, and the Japanese are unable to move on it from the north.

The Japanese main attack has been the heaviest against the Russian centre and the right, particularly against the centre, fronting which the Japanese have taken up a strong position at Shu Shyen. Pigeon Bay had been the scene of fighting several days before the general assault had begun, the Japanese never being able to hold for long any territory they might gain. Their attacks were made mostly at night, during foggy days and misty mornings.

Recently the Chinese theatre was hit and a score of people were killed and wounded. One shell exploded in the corral of Chinese who tell the story, killing five donkeys. Civilians are allowed to leave the bomb-proofs during the lulls in artillery fire, but those intermissions are rare and everybody is worn and anxious over the situation. An unusually large proportion of young company officers have been killed, which is partially owing to their duties and partly to reckless daring.

Russia Violates Agreement with Britain.

London, Aug. 23—The news that the Russian volunteer fleet steamer Smolensk is again stopping British vessels leads the London newspapers to question the value of the assurances which Premier Balfour announced had been given by the Russian government that the St. Petersburg and the Smolensk would no longer be utilized as cruisers.

According to despatches from Durban, Natal, the Smolensk was supposed to be watching for the British steamer Orleay, which left New York on July 9 bound for Fusan with a cargo of railway material. The Ormleay left Durban Aug. 20 just before the steamer Comenan was stopped and so escaped.

All the morning papers make editorial comments on the incident.

The Standard says:—

"Russia has only to remember the part she took together with the other northern powers in forming an armed neutrality during the American war for independence to find a leading example of the resistance offered to a neutral whose trade was insufferably molested by a naval belligerent. Russia cannot really wish to drive Great Britain and the United States into contemplating the supreme method of forcibly checking the harrassing operations of her cruisers; yet by treating food and railway material as contraband of war she is leading them to believe that milder measures will not suffice."

Most of the other journals are content with urging the necessity for the publication of official documents to show exactly what arrangement has been made with Russia.

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