

CHÂTEAU ROYAL

I

OF Francis Benediek Stewart I tell—Dick Stewart, the young man in the story; and of what befell him in France two years ago.

Perceive him. Not the pale handsome hero, but ruddy and vital and vivid, a man's man; solid and wholesome though rapid and bright; garrulous, bubbling over with quip and quiz and exaggeration; frank and loyal, and winsome with good humour, if sometimes impetuous and often slangy; fine stuff not yet quite finished, but gentleman in all the five senses of the word.

Perceive him outside a village inn. His face turned northward, he watches a cloud of dust deposit itself again upon a quieting road. Hrush-h-h!—a dying noise, the sound of swift wheels dulling off into distance. "Good riddance!" he says, as he turns. He turns his face towards the village. At that hour the village is a fresh and morning place, all bright and lively. Sluiced water splashing over blue cobblestones, runnels singing, cockerels shouting, hens clacking and chuckling, men whistling, women chattering, children jumping; this August morning the village has awaked in good spirits and good time. The fragrance of roasting coffee-beans diffuses in the air; light sparkles on the wet red roofs and in between the violet shadows; freshness and gaiety, summer earliness, day's childhood gleam over all.

Lightly Dick Stewart turns, lightly he picks up his pack and his stick, and "Here beginneth again!" he lightly says to himself, as he steps out upon a strange and adventurous road. He is going to walk into the unknown.