

forms grew up straight among the undergrowth of trees, indifferent to the other pistol, and ran back or over to where the wounded comrade lay.

"Heaven's thunder!" cried Count Victor, "I wish I had aimed more carefully." He was appalled at the apparent tragedy of his act. A suicidal regret and curiosity kept him standing where he fired, with the pistol still smoking in his hand, till there came from the men clustered round the body in the brake a loud simultaneous wail unfamiliar to his ear, but unmistakable in its import. He turned and ran wildly for the tower that had no aspect of sanctuary in it; his heart drummed noisily at his breast; his mouth parched and gaped. In upon his lips in a little dropped water; he tasted the salt of his perspiration. And then he knew weariness, great weariness, that plucked at the sinews behind his knees, and felt sore along the hips and back—the result of his days of hard riding come suddenly to the surface. Truly he was not happy.

But if he ran wearily he ran well, better at least than his pursuers, who had their own reasons for taking it more leisurely, and in a while there was neither sight nor sound of the enemy.

He was beginning to get some satisfaction from this, when, turning a bend of the path within two hundred yards of the castle, behold an unmistakable enemy barred his way! An ugly, hoggish, obese man, with bare legs most grotesquely like pillars of granite and a protuberant paunch; but the devil must have been in his legs to carry him more swiftly than thoroughbred limbs had borne Count Victor. He stood sneering in the path, turning up the right sleeve of a soiled and ragged saffron shirt with his left hand, the right being engaged most ominously with a sword of a fashion that might well convince the Frenchman he had some new methods of fence to encounter in a few minutes.

High and low looked Count Victor as he slacked his pace, seeking for some way out of this sack,