

Sophy of Kravonia

by ANTHONY HOPE

Author of "The Prisoner of Zenda"

Copyright, 1909, Anthony Hope Hawkins

(Continued)

Markat understood them very well. There was no need of Stanfield's mocking little smile to point the meaning. Markat was to be Lepage's jailer; most civil and considerate form he was made as close a prisoner as the man he guarded. Evidently Stanfield had come to the conclusion that he could not ask Markat to put too great a strain on his conscience. Stanfield, however, seemed very kindly disposed toward him and was, indeed, almost apologetic.

"I've every hope that this responsible and, I fear, very irksome duty may last only the few hours of the morning, but put me under a personal obligation by undertaking it, my dear Markat."

In the absence of any choice Markat saluted and answered, "I understand my orders, general."

Stanfield interposed, "Captain Stanfield is also aware of their purport."

Stanfield looked vexed. "Yes, yes, but I'm sure Markat himself is quite enough." It seems odd that in the midst of such a trial, a man in which he was engaged Stanfield should have found leisure or heart to care about Markat's feelings. Yet so it was—a curiously human touch creeping in. He shut Markat up only under the strongest sense of necessity and with great reluctance. Probably Stanfield had insisted in the private conversation which they had held together, Markat had shown such evident signs of flinching over the job proposed for Captain Hercules!

Lepage's heart was wrung, but his spirit was not broken. Stanfield's ironical smile called an answering one to his lips.

"It would console my feelings if I also were put in charge of somebody, general," he said. "Shall I, in my turn, keep an eye on Dr. Natcheff or report if the captain here is remiss in the duty of keeping himself a prisoner?"

"I don't think you need trouble yourself, M. Lepage. Captain Stanfield will relieve you of responsibility." To Lepage, too, Stanfield was gentle, urbane, almost apologetic.

"And how long am I to live, general?"

"You're in the enviable position, M. Lepage, of being able, subject to our common mortality, to settle that for yourself. Come, come, we'll discuss matters again tomorrow night or the following morning. There are many men who prefer not to do things, but will accept a thing when it's done. They're not necessarily unwise. We're glad to have you to run that give you the opportunity of being one of them. I think you'll be prudent to take it. Anyhow, don't be angry. You must remember that you've given us a good deal of trouble."

"Between us we have killed the king."

Stanfield waved his hands in a commiserating way. "Practical men mustn't spend time in lamenting the past," he said.

"Nor in mere conversation, however pleasant," Stanfield broke in, with a laugh. "Captain Markat, march your prisoner to his quarters."

His smile made the order a mockery. Markat felt it, and a hatred of the man rose in him. But he could do nothing. He did not lead Lepage to his quarters, but followed sheepishly in his prisoner's wake. They went together into the little room where Lepage slept.

"Close quarters, too, captain," said the valet. "There is but one chair. Let me put it at your service." He himself sat down on the bed, took out his hacco and began to roll himself a cigarette.

Markat shut the door and then threw himself on the solitary chair in a heavy dependency of spirit and a confused condition of feelings. He was glad to be out of the work, yet he resented the manner in which he was put inside. There were things going on in which it was well to have no hand. Yet was there not a thing going on in which every man ought to have a hand on one side or the other? Not to do it, but to be ready to accept it when done? He was enough of a soldier to feel that there lay the worst, the meanest thing of all. Not to dare to do it, but to profit by the doing! Stanfield had used the words to Lepage, his prisoner. By making him in effect a prisoner, too, the general showed that he applied them to the captain also. Any thing seemed better than that—yet it would be better to ride to Prasko behind Captain Hercules! In that adventure a man might, at least, risk his life!

"An odd world!" said the valet, puffing out his cigarette smoke. "Honest men for prisoners and murderers for jailers! Are you a prisoner or a jailer, Captain Markat?"

It was left to Lepage to bow to Stanfield and express thanks.

"Some wine, captain. Some wine to cheer you up in this tiresome duty of guarding me!" cried Lepage, picking up a bottle in one hand and a glass in the other. "Oh, but that very necked fellow has brought you a dirty glass. A moment, captain! I'll wash it." And off he bounded—not even waiting to set down the bottle—into the little room beyond.

His brain was working hard now,

marshalling his resources against his difficulties. The difficulties were thirty feet to fall. Stanfield's sentries, his broad swift sword, the Krath—a for even in normal times there was always a sentry on the bridge—then the search for Zerkovitch in Slavna. His resources were a mattress, a spare pair of sheets and a pair of trousers.

Full of the draft which Dr. Natcheff had prescribed for the king.

"It's very unfortunate, but I've not the least notion how much would kill him," thought Lepage, as he poured the medicine—presumably a strong sedative—into the wineglass and filled up with wine from the bottle Stanfield had provided. He came back, holding the glass aloft with a satisfied air. "Now it's fit for a gentleman to drink out of," said he, as he set it down by Markat's head. The captain took it up and swallowed it at a draft.

"Ugh! Coked, I think! Beasty, anyhow!" said he.

Captain Markat thought he would smoke his cigar in the little room, lying on the bed. He was tired and sleepy—very sleepy, there was no denying it. Lepage sat down and ate and drank. He found no fault with the wine in the bottle. Then he went out and looked at Markat. The captain lay in his shirt, breeches and boots. He was sound asleep and breathing heavily. His cigar had fallen on the sheet, but apparently had been out before it fell. Lepage regarded him with pursed lips, shrugged his shoulders and slipped the captain's revolver into his pocket. The captain's recovery must be left to fate.

For the next hour he worked at his pair of sheets, sewing, twisting and splicing. In the end he found himself possessed of a fairly stout rope twelve or thirteen feet long, but he could find nothing solid to tie it to near the window except the bed, and that was a hard way. He would still have to fall of twenty feet, and the ground was hard with a spring frost. There would be need of the mattress. He put out all the lights in the room and cautiously raised the window.

The night was dark. He could not see the ground. He stood there ten minutes. Then he heard a measured tramp. A dark figure, just distinguishable, came around the corner of the palace, walked past the window to the end of the building, turned, walked back and disappeared. Hurriedly Lepage struck a match and took the time. Again he waited; again the figure came. Lepage struck a light and took the time. He went through this process five times before he felt reasonably sure that he could rely on having ten minutes to himself if he started the moment Stanfield's sentry had gone around the corner of the building.

He pulled the mattress up on to the sill of the window and waited. There was no sound now but of Markat's stertorous breathing, but presently he saw the sentry's light and saw the low came, passed, turned and passed away. Lepage gave a last tug at the fastenings of his room, then he slipped out of the window, took the mattress and dropped it very carefully as straight down as he could.

"I wish I knew the safest way to fall," thought Lepage, dangling at the end of his rope. It swayed about terribly, he waited awhile for it to steady itself—he feared to miss the mattress—but he could not wait long or that measured tramp and that dark figure would come. There would be a search for him, and he would be reported and what of Lepage then? He gathered his legs up behind his knees, took a long breath—and fell. As luck would have it, though he landed on the very edge of the mattress, yet he did land on it, and he landed forward on his face, shaken, but with bones intact. There was a numb feeling about his knees—nothing worse than that.

He drew another long breath. Heavy bodies and even mattresses fall quickly. He must have seven or eight minutes yet!

But not heavy bodies, even mattresses, falling quickly, make a noise. Lepage, too, had come down with a splash, and he had come down with a splash. The dark figure came running around the corner. What next? Next the challenge—then the spurt of light and the report. What of Lepage then? The rest of humanity for certainty knew. Of that nothing, actual or possible, Lepage did not approve. He hit the mattress on to his back, bent himself nearly double and, thus both burdened and protected, made for the river. He must have looked like a turtle scurrying to the sea lest he should be turned over and so left for soup in due season.

"Who goes there?" said Halt.

The turtle scurried on. It was no moment to stop and discuss matters.

The spurt of light—the report! There was a hole in the mattress, but it was above Lepage's head. Indeed, it hit at the head, and it was most likely to hit the head. That vital portion of him was tucked away too carefully. He presented a broader aim, but the mattress masked him nobly. There was another shot—then the northwest corner of the mattress this time—but the mattress on the river's edge. The next instant it was floating on the current of the Krath, and Stanfield's sentry was indulging in some very pretty practices at it. He hit it every time until the swift current carried it around the bend and out of sight.

(To be continued)

"I can marry a rich girl whom I don't love, or a penniless girl whom I love dearly. Which shall it be?"

"Follow the dictates of your heart, my boy, and it can't hurt you."

"And off he bounded—not even waiting to set down the bottle—into the little room beyond."

His brain was working hard now,

marshalling his resources against his difficulties. The difficulties were thirty feet to fall. Stanfield's sentries, his broad swift sword, the Krath—a for even in normal times there was always a sentry on the bridge—then the search for Zerkovitch in Slavna. His resources were a mattress, a spare pair of sheets and a pair of trousers.

Full of the draft which Dr. Natcheff had prescribed for the king.

"It's very unfortunate, but I've not the least notion how much would kill him," thought Lepage, as he poured the medicine—presumably a strong sedative—into the wineglass and filled up with wine from the bottle Stanfield had provided. He came back, holding the glass aloft with a satisfied air. "Now it's fit for a gentleman to drink out of," said he, as he set it down by Markat's head. The captain took it up and swallowed it at a draft.

"Ugh! Coked, I think! Beasty, anyhow!" said he.

Captain Markat thought he would smoke his cigar in the little room, lying on the bed. He was tired and sleepy—very sleepy, there was no denying it. Lepage sat down and ate and drank. He found no fault with the wine in the bottle. Then he went out and looked at Markat. The captain lay in his shirt, breeches and boots. He was sound asleep and breathing heavily. His cigar had fallen on the sheet, but apparently had been out before it fell. Lepage regarded him with pursed lips, shrugged his shoulders and slipped the captain's revolver into his pocket. The captain's recovery must be left to fate.

For the next hour he worked at his pair of sheets, sewing, twisting and splicing. In the end he found himself possessed of a fairly stout rope twelve or thirteen feet long, but he could find nothing solid to tie it to near the window except the bed, and that was a hard way. He would still have to fall of twenty feet, and the ground was hard with a spring frost. There would be need of the mattress. He put out all the lights in the room and cautiously raised the window.

The night was dark. He could not see the ground. He stood there ten minutes. Then he heard a measured tramp. A dark figure, just distinguishable, came around the corner of the palace, walked past the window to the end of the building, turned, walked back and disappeared. Hurriedly Lepage struck a match and took the time. Again he waited; again the figure came. Lepage struck a light and took the time. He went through this process five times before he felt reasonably sure that he could rely on having ten minutes to himself if he started the moment Stanfield's sentry had gone around the corner of the building.

He pulled the mattress up on to the sill of the window and waited. There was no sound now but of Markat's stertorous breathing, but presently he saw the sentry's light and saw the low came, passed, turned and passed away. Lepage gave a last tug at the fastenings of his room, then he slipped out of the window, took the mattress and dropped it very carefully as straight down as he could.

"I wish I knew the safest way to fall," thought Lepage, dangling at the end of his rope. It swayed about terribly, he waited awhile for it to steady itself—he feared to miss the mattress—but he could not wait long or that measured tramp and that dark figure would come. There would be a search for him, and he would be reported and what of Lepage then? He gathered his legs up behind his knees, took a long breath—and fell. As luck would have it, though he landed on the very edge of the mattress, yet he did land on it, and he landed forward on his face, shaken, but with bones intact. There was a numb feeling about his knees—nothing worse than that.

He drew another long breath. Heavy bodies and even mattresses fall quickly. He must have seven or eight minutes yet!

But not heavy bodies, even mattresses, falling quickly, make a noise. Lepage, too, had come down with a splash, and he had come down with a splash. The dark figure came running around the corner. What next? Next the challenge—then the spurt of light and the report. What of Lepage then? The rest of humanity for certainty knew. Of that nothing, actual or possible, Lepage did not approve. He hit the mattress on to his back, bent himself nearly double and, thus both burdened and protected, made for the river. He must have looked like a turtle scurrying to the sea lest he should be turned over and so left for soup in due season.

"Who goes there?" said Halt.

The turtle scurried on. It was no moment to stop and discuss matters.

The spurt of light—the report! There was a hole in the mattress, but it was above Lepage's head. Indeed, it hit at the head, and it was most likely to hit the head. That vital portion of him was tucked away too carefully. He presented a broader aim, but the mattress masked him nobly. There was another shot—then the northwest corner of the mattress this time—but the mattress on the river's edge. The next instant it was floating on the current of the Krath, and Stanfield's sentry was indulging in some very pretty practices at it. He hit it every time until the swift current carried it around the bend and out of sight.

(To be continued)

"I can marry a rich girl whom I don't love, or a penniless girl whom I love dearly. Which shall it be?"

"Follow the dictates of your heart, my boy, and it can't hurt you."

"And off he bounded—not even waiting to set down the bottle—into the little room beyond."

His brain was working hard now,

marshalling his resources against his difficulties. The difficulties were thirty feet to fall. Stanfield's sentries, his broad swift sword, the Krath—a for even in normal times there was always a sentry on the bridge—then the search for Zerkovitch in Slavna. His resources were a mattress, a spare pair of sheets and a pair of trousers.

Full of the draft which Dr. Natcheff had prescribed for the king.

"It's very unfortunate, but I've not the least notion how much would kill him," thought Lepage, as he poured the medicine—presumably a strong sedative—into the wineglass and filled up with wine from the bottle Stanfield had provided. He came back, holding the glass aloft with a satisfied air. "Now it's fit for a gentleman to drink out of," said he, as he set it down by Markat's head. The captain took it up and swallowed it at a draft.

"Ugh! Coked, I think! Beasty, anyhow!" said he.

Captain Markat thought he would smoke his cigar in the little room, lying on the bed. He was tired and sleepy—very sleepy, there was no denying it. Lepage sat down and ate and drank. He found no fault with the wine in the bottle. Then he went out and looked at Markat. The captain lay in his shirt, breeches and boots. He was sound asleep and breathing heavily. His cigar had fallen on the sheet, but apparently had been out before it fell. Lepage regarded him with pursed lips, shrugged his shoulders and slipped the captain's revolver into his pocket. The captain's recovery must be left to fate.

For the next hour he worked at his pair of sheets, sewing, twisting and splicing. In the end he found himself possessed of a fairly stout rope twelve or thirteen feet long, but he could find nothing solid to tie it to near the window except the bed, and that was a hard way. He would still have to fall of twenty feet, and the ground was hard with a spring frost. There would be need of the mattress. He put out all the lights in the room and cautiously raised the window.

The night was dark. He could not see the ground. He stood there ten minutes. Then he heard a measured tramp. A dark figure, just distinguishable, came around the corner of the palace, walked past the window to the end of the building, turned, walked back and disappeared. Hurriedly Lepage struck a match and took the time. Again he waited; again the figure came. Lepage struck a light and took the time. He went through this process five times before he felt reasonably sure that he could rely on having ten minutes to himself if he started the moment Stanfield's sentry had gone around the corner of the building.

He pulled the mattress up on to the sill of the window and waited. There was no sound now but of Markat's stertorous breathing, but presently he saw the sentry's light and saw the low came, passed, turned and passed away. Lepage gave a last tug at the fastenings of his room, then he slipped out of the window, took the mattress and dropped it very carefully as straight down as he could.

"I wish I knew the safest way to fall," thought Lepage, dangling at the end of his rope. It swayed about terribly, he waited awhile for it to steady itself—he feared to miss the mattress—but he could not wait long or that measured tramp and that dark figure would come. There would be a search for him, and he would be reported and what of Lepage then? He gathered his legs up behind his knees, took a long breath—and fell. As luck would have it, though he landed on the very edge of the mattress, yet he did land on it, and he landed forward on his face, shaken, but with bones intact. There was a numb feeling about his knees—nothing worse than that.

He drew another long breath. Heavy bodies and even mattresses fall quickly. He must have seven or eight minutes yet!

But not heavy bodies, even mattresses, falling quickly, make a noise. Lepage, too, had come down with a splash, and he had come down with a splash. The dark figure came running around the corner. What next? Next the challenge—then the spurt of light and the report. What of Lepage then? The rest of humanity for certainty knew. Of that nothing, actual or possible, Lepage did not approve. He hit the mattress on to his back, bent himself nearly double and, thus both burdened and protected, made for the river. He must have looked like a turtle scurrying to the sea lest he should be turned over and so left for soup in due season.

"Who goes there?" said Halt.

The turtle scurried on. It was no moment to stop and discuss matters.

The spurt of light—the report! There was a hole in the mattress, but it was above Lepage's head. Indeed, it hit at the head, and it was most likely to hit the head. That vital portion of him was tucked away too carefully. He presented a broader aim, but the mattress masked him nobly. There was another shot—then the northwest corner of the mattress this time—but the mattress on the river's edge. The next instant it was floating on the current of the Krath, and Stanfield's sentry was indulging in some very pretty practices at it. He hit it every time until the swift current carried it around the bend and out of sight.

(To be continued)

"I can marry a rich girl whom I don't love, or a penniless girl whom I love dearly. Which shall it be?"

"Follow the dictates of your heart, my boy, and it can't hurt you."

"And off he bounded—not even waiting to set down the bottle—into the little room beyond."

His brain was working hard now,

marshalling his resources against his difficulties. The difficulties were thirty feet to fall. Stanfield's sentries, his broad swift sword, the Krath—a for even in normal times there was always a sentry on the bridge—then the search for Zerkovitch in Slavna. His resources were a mattress, a spare pair of sheets and a pair of trousers.

Full of the draft which Dr. Natcheff had prescribed for the king.

"It's very unfortunate, but I've not the least notion how much would kill him," thought Lepage, as he poured the medicine—presumably a strong sedative—into the wineglass and filled up with wine from the bottle Stanfield had provided. He came back, holding the glass aloft with a satisfied air. "Now it's fit for a gentleman to drink out of," said he, as he set it down by Markat's head. The captain took it up and swallowed it at a draft.

"Ugh! Coked, I think! Beasty, anyhow!" said he.

Captain Markat thought he would smoke his cigar in the little room, lying on the bed. He was tired and sleepy—very sleepy, there was no denying it. Lepage sat down and ate and drank. He found no fault with the wine in the bottle. Then he went out and looked at Markat. The captain lay in his shirt, breeches and boots. He was sound asleep and breathing heavily. His cigar had fallen on the sheet, but apparently had been out before it fell. Lepage regarded him with pursed lips, shrugged his shoulders and slipped the captain's revolver into his pocket. The captain's recovery must be left to fate.

For the next hour he worked at his pair of sheets, sewing, twisting and splicing. In the end he found himself possessed of a fairly stout rope twelve or thirteen feet long, but he could find nothing solid to tie it to near the window except the bed, and that was a hard way. He would still have to fall of twenty feet, and the ground was hard with a spring frost. There would be need of the mattress. He put out all the lights in the room and cautiously raised the window.

The night was dark. He could not see the ground. He stood there ten minutes. Then he heard a measured tramp. A dark figure, just distinguishable, came around the corner of the palace, walked past the window to the end of the building, turned, walked back and disappeared. Hurriedly Lepage struck a match and took the time. Again he waited; again the figure came. Lepage struck a light and took the time. He went through this process five times before he felt reasonably sure that he could rely on having ten minutes to himself if he started the moment Stanfield's sentry had gone around the corner of the building.

He pulled the mattress up on to the sill of the window and waited. There was no sound now but of Markat's stertorous breathing, but presently he saw the sentry's light and saw the low came, passed, turned and passed away. Lepage gave a last tug at the fastenings of his room, then he slipped out of the window, took the mattress and dropped it very carefully as straight down as he could.

"I wish I knew the safest way to fall," thought Lepage, dangling at the end of his rope. It swayed about terribly, he waited awhile for it to steady itself—he feared to miss the mattress—but he could not wait long or that measured tramp and that dark figure would come. There would be a search for him, and he would be reported and what of Lepage then? He gathered his legs up behind his knees, took a long breath—and fell. As luck would have it, though he landed on the very edge of the mattress, yet he did land on it, and he landed forward on his face, shaken, but with bones intact. There was a numb feeling about his knees—nothing worse than that.

He drew another long breath. Heavy bodies and even mattresses fall quickly. He must have seven or eight minutes yet!

But not heavy bodies, even mattresses, falling quickly, make a noise. Lepage, too, had come down with a splash, and he had come down with a splash. The dark figure came running around the corner. What next? Next the challenge—then the spurt of light and the report. What of Lepage then? The rest of humanity for certainty knew. Of that nothing, actual or possible, Lepage did not approve. He hit the mattress on to his back, bent himself nearly double and, thus both burdened and protected, made for the river. He must have looked like a turtle scurrying to the sea lest he should be turned over and so left for soup in due season.

"Who goes there?" said Halt.

The turtle scurried on. It was no moment to stop and discuss matters.

The spurt of light—the report! There was a hole in the mattress, but it was above Lepage's head. Indeed, it hit at the head, and it was most likely to hit the head. That vital portion of him was tucked away too carefully. He presented a broader aim, but the mattress masked him nobly. There was another shot—then the northwest corner of the mattress this time—but the mattress on the river's edge. The next instant it was floating on the current of the Krath, and Stanfield's sentry was indulging in some very pretty practices at it. He hit it every time until the swift current carried it around the bend and out of sight.

(To be continued)

"I can marry a rich girl whom I don't love, or a penniless girl whom I love dearly. Which shall it be?"

"Follow the dictates of your heart, my boy, and it can't hurt you."

"And off he bounded—not even waiting to set down the bottle—into the little room beyond."

His brain was working hard now,

marshalling his resources against his difficulties. The difficulties were thirty feet to fall. Stanfield's sentries, his broad swift sword, the Krath—a for even in normal times there was always a sentry on the bridge—then the search for Zerkovitch in Slavna. His resources were a mattress, a spare pair of sheets and a pair of trousers.

Full of the draft which Dr. Natcheff had prescribed for the king.

"It's very unfortunate, but I've not the least notion how much would kill him," thought Lepage, as he poured the medicine—presumably a strong sedative—into the wineglass and filled up with wine from the bottle Stanfield had provided. He came back, holding the glass aloft with a satisfied air. "Now it's fit for a gentleman to drink out of," said he, as he set it down by Markat's head. The captain took it up and swallowed it at a draft.

"Ugh! Coked, I think! Beasty, anyhow!" said he.

Captain Markat thought he would smoke his cigar in the little room, lying on the bed. He was tired and sleepy—very sleepy, there was no denying it. Lepage sat down and ate and drank. He found no fault with the wine in the bottle. Then he went out and looked at Markat. The captain lay in his shirt, breeches and boots. He was sound asleep and breathing heavily. His cigar had fallen on the sheet, but apparently had been out before it fell. Lepage regarded him with pursed lips, shrugged his shoulders and slipped the captain's revolver into his pocket. The captain's recovery must be left to fate.

For the next hour he worked at his pair of sheets, sewing, twisting and splicing. In the end he found himself possessed of a fairly stout rope twelve or thirteen feet long, but he could find nothing solid to tie it to near the window except the bed, and that was a hard way. He would still have to fall of twenty feet, and the ground was hard with a spring frost. There would be need of the mattress. He put out all the lights in the room and cautiously raised the window.

The night was dark. He could not see the ground. He stood there ten minutes. Then he heard a measured tramp. A dark figure, just distinguishable, came around the corner of the palace, walked past the window to the end of the building, turned, walked back and disappeared. Hurriedly Lepage struck a match and took the time. Again he waited; again the figure came. Lepage struck a light and took the time. He went through this process five times before he felt reasonably sure that he could rely on having ten minutes to himself if he started the moment Stanfield's sentry had gone around the corner of the building.

He pulled the mattress up on to the sill of the window and waited. There was no sound now but of Markat's stertorous breathing, but presently he saw the sentry's light and saw the low came, passed, turned and passed away. Lepage gave a last tug at the fastenings of his room, then he slipped out of the window, took the mattress and dropped it very carefully as straight down as he could.

"I wish I knew the safest way to fall," thought Lepage, dangling at the end of his rope. It swayed about terribly, he waited awhile for it to steady itself—he feared to miss the mattress—but he could not wait long or that measured tramp and that dark figure would come. There would be a search for him, and he would be reported and what of Lepage then? He gathered his legs up behind his knees, took a long breath—and fell. As luck would have it, though he landed on the very edge of the mattress, yet he did land on it, and he landed forward on his face, shaken, but with bones intact. There was a numb feeling about his knees—nothing worse than that.

He drew another long breath. Heavy bodies and even mattresses fall quickly. He must have seven or eight minutes yet!

But not heavy bodies, even mattresses, falling quickly, make a noise. Lepage, too, had come down with a splash, and he had come down with a splash. The dark figure came running around the corner. What next? Next the challenge—then the spurt of light and the report. What of Lepage then? The rest of humanity for certainty knew. Of that nothing, actual or possible, Lepage did not approve. He hit the mattress on to his back, bent himself nearly double and, thus both burdened and protected, made for the river. He must have looked like a turtle scurrying to the sea lest he should be turned over and so left for soup in due season.

"Who goes there?" said Halt.

The turtle scurried on. It was no moment to stop and discuss matters.

The spurt of light—the report! There was a hole in the mattress, but it was above Lepage's head. Indeed, it hit at the head, and it was most likely to hit the head. That vital portion of him was tucked away too carefully. He presented a broader aim, but the mattress masked him nobly. There was another shot—then the northwest corner of the mattress this time—but the mattress on the river's edge. The next instant it was floating on the current of the Krath, and Stanfield's sentry was indulging in some very pretty practices at it. He hit it every time until the swift current carried it around the bend and out of sight.

(To be continued)

"I can marry a rich girl whom I don't love, or a penniless girl whom I love dearly. Which shall it be?"

"Follow the dictates of your heart, my boy, and it can't hurt you."

"And off he bounded—not even waiting to set down the bottle—into the little room beyond."

His brain was working hard now,

marshalling his resources against his difficulties. The difficulties were thirty feet to fall. Stanfield's sentries, his broad swift sword, the Krath—a for even in normal times there was always a sentry on the bridge—then the search for Zerkovitch in Slavna. His resources were a mattress, a spare pair of sheets and a pair of trousers.

Full of the draft which Dr. Natcheff had prescribed for the king.

"It's very unfortunate, but I've not the least notion how much would kill him," thought Lepage, as he poured the medicine—presumably a strong sedative—into the wineglass and filled up with wine from the bottle Stanfield had provided. He came back, holding the glass aloft with a satisfied air. "Now it's fit for a gentleman to drink out of," said he, as he set it down by Markat's head. The captain took it up and swallowed it at a draft.

"Ugh! Coked, I think! Beasty, anyhow!" said he.

Captain Markat thought he would smoke his cigar in the little room, lying on the bed. He was tired and sleepy—very sleepy, there was no denying it. Lepage sat down and ate and drank. He found no fault with the wine in the bottle. Then he went out and looked at Markat. The captain lay in his shirt, breeches and boots. He was sound asleep and breathing heavily. His cigar had fallen on the sheet, but apparently had been out before it fell. Lepage regarded him with pursed lips, shrugged his shoulders and slipped the captain's revolver into his pocket. The captain's recovery must be left to fate.

For the next hour he worked at his pair of sheets, sewing, twisting and splicing. In the end he found himself possessed of a fairly stout rope twelve or thirteen feet long, but he could find nothing solid to tie it to near the window except the bed, and that was a hard way. He would still have to fall of twenty feet