

The Adventurers

By H. B. MARRIOTT WATSON

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"I confess that I was utterly at a loss what to make of him and was inclined to interpret him for a mild lunatic, but we proceeded along the roadway, I with the bridle of my horse over my arm. He still clung to me, discoursing quietly in a melodious voice upon his views of life and the philosophy we should derive from it, while I listened, for the most part, in silence. But after waiting for a quarter of an hour, the latter part of which time was spent in a somewhat laborious ascent, we came out upon the summit of a little hill clad in the splendid livery of summer and surrounded by what seemed in the distance to be the ruins of a castle. Here the old gentleman came to a halt, ceasing simultaneously of his chatter, and looked toward the building.

"I am fully conscious, Mr. —, I don't think I caught your name, Mr. —." "Greator, I told him. "Thank you," said he. "I am fully conscious, Mr. Greator, that I am under a deep obligation to you for your great service this afternoon. Greator: There are, if I remember aright, Greatorxes in Hampshire."

I explained that we were cadets of that family. He bowed his acknowledgments of my explanation and proceeded.

"Hospitality tells me that I can do no less than offer you the opportunity of refreshment for yourself or—his eyes dwelt abstractedly upon my horse—'for your animal. But I am reluctant to press the offer upon you, seeing that it is very probable you have ridden far'—he was observing poor Jupiter's flanks—"and are still far from your destination."

His eyes interrogated me, but with no rude curiosity, rather as if they offered a remark which I might consider a question or not, as I chose. I answered frankly:

"I am staying at the Swan, in Raymond, and to say truly—I laughed—"I am not quite sure how far I am from the town or in what direction it lies."

"In that case," he said urbanely, but with a sense of satisfaction, as I imagined, "my reluctance vanishes. You are some seven miles from Raymond, and my horse is here."

Without more ado we resumed our walk and, entering an avenue of limes, came next upon an iron gateway set in a high brick wall. It was of very ancient workmanship, but as nothing to the house itself, which came passed into full view as soon as we had passed the entrance. It lay some 300 yards back, approached through a patch of park ground with grass and interspersed with noble trees. My first impression had not been wrong. It was nothing less than the ruins of a small castle, one of those fortresses reared by the border barons against the incursions of Welsh barbarians in the Plantagenet times. As we drew near my gaze devoured the building and took in many points of interest. It was quite small, but, saving for one wing in perfect integrity. From the huge masonry of the drum towers down to the moat and portcullis all was as it had been in the days maybe of Hugh Lupus. The wing of the quadrangle to our left was dismantled and lay strewn with huge stones in precarious ruin. A hundred yards or so upon the other side, however, gleamed the red roof and heavy thatch of farm buildings, and a round stack or two in the neighborhood proved that the fortress kept its ancient uses no longer.

"You will see that I am able to resist a siege," said my host, with a whimsical smile, as we crossed the drawbridge, adding, with what seemed to me a comical irony and looking down at the bridge, "I fear, though, we should find some trouble with the hinges."

We passed through the arch of masonry and into the courtyard within, where the old gentleman speedily summoned a man and gave him charge of my horse. And here again I noticed that further appearances testified to the use of the castle as a farm. From a scrutiny of this pleasant aspect I was aroused by my host, who, pausing as he pushed open a huge oaken door, turned to me suddenly.

"I am extremely remiss, Mr. Greator," he exclaimed with a gesture of apology. "You have not yet the style of your grateful host. My name is Kesteven, and this is generally known as Ivor castle."

All this was conceived in the most formal and eccentric temper, and doubtless had it not been for the strange interest of his habit and conduct I might not have consented so meekly to be his guest, for it was now time for my homeward journey. However, I must, it appeared, sit and drink with him a glass of sherry in his library, a large and ancient room with a very fine display of oaken shelves and paneling.

A little later I excused myself, and rose for departure. For a minute or two he appeared to have fallen into abstraction, and then, glancing at me quickly, he regarded me with a steadfast, inquiring gaze.

"Mr. Greator," said he, "you are a young man. I begin to think that we should find much in common. You will permit the question? Are you married?"

I assured him that I was not. He nodded, as if this were satisfactory news. "Nor am I," he answered, "but very probably for another reason. I cannot expect you to take part in my philosophy, but I am reminded that you have seen nothing of a house which is of some historical interest, and which I should esteem myself happy to show you. Is it necessary that you should return to your Swan this evening?"

The invitation in the query took me aback, for, eccentric as my host undoubtedly was, I had not anticipated this proffer of hospitality. Yet there was certainly no pressing reason for my return, and here, at least, I should have more congenial company than in my miscellaneous taproom. I replied something to the effect of this thought.

"Good," said he, brightening a little. "You are kind to cheer a solitary. I can even promise you a bottle of champagne if you are young enough. If you will allow me I will call my housekeeper."

He rose and went to the bell, but, pausing with his hand upon the rope, looked at me gravely.

"I should be doing you wrong, Mr. Greator," he said, "if I were not to let you know that by consenting to be my guest tonight you are conferring upon me a great favor. You place me under a particular obligation."

I told him, laughing, that the obligation was mine.

"No," said he. "I fear that my meaning is not plain. Let me say this—I have a particular reason for wishing your companionship tonight."

I bowed politely and offered some conventional reply, though this deep air of mystery puzzled me.

"You are a strong man, Mr. Greator," he continued, surveying me seriously. "I must tell you that I have no one sleeping in the house save my housekeeper and a maid. The man you saw, who took your horse, sleeps in a cottage at Llanellan." He paused. "I was unfortunate enough to lose my valet a month ago and so far have been unable to fill his place."

I began to understand. He was in some fear of his lonely condition. Possibly he dreaded an attack by his late assailant. Suddenly, too, ran into my memory the scene in the taproom on the previous night, the miller and his long pipe and his story. There was that same tale that should have been exciting about a burglary. And here I was in Ivor castle.

"If you are thinking of that scoundrel!" I began. "Surely the police!" He interrupted me with a smile.

"The police, Mr. Greator, are seven miles from Ivor castle. But pray do not misunderstand me. I shall be infinitely obliged by your company. It's long since I had an intelligent conversation. But I would not detain you if you had any scruples about staying."

I laughed. "Not I!" said I. "I will stay and gladly." And in truth I meant it, for the adventure interested me not a little. Was it burglary?

It was in the dining room that we spent the evening. There was a long, low roofed chamber occupying the ground floor and opening with windows upon the cobbles courtyard on the one side and the meadows of the park on the other. It was a great chamber to contain but two people, but somehow the black oak of the walls and the general air of the upholstery prohibited the thought of discomfort. These walls were not vacant, nor this space, but tenanted, if one considered duly, by a concourse of illustrious faces and high stepping ghosts. Upon this point, as it happened, I was not long left in curiosity, for Mr. Kesteven was in the mood to confide the history of the castle to me. He was a queer creature, partaking, as it seemed to me, of the most diverse and incongruous emotions. Constantly he would set me wondering upon his statements, striving to pick some order in their apparent confusion. One moment quite a sounding pride rang in his pompous enunciation of the titles of some great noble, while the next I was driven to suppose by very clear signs that he displayed nothing but a pitiful contempt toward the whole prejudice of race and family. The man struck me as wearing a mask, and that a mask of such severity and primness as to offer very few secrets to his company. And even at his moments of most spacious frankness I was never able to determine the depth of its genuineness.

He fetched me out some wines, giving me a generous choice, but himself drinking but sparingly.

"No, thank you; I have never smoked," said he in reply to my offer of a cigar. "Will you not smoke yourself, Mr. Greator?" And pray try that port. I understand it to be of a particular year. He insisted gently upon helping me from the decanter and then dropped softly into his chair.

Suddenly he rose and going to a window threw it open and leaned forth. I heard somewhere from the deep recesses of the old house a clock striking the hour of 1. Mr. Kesteven closed the casement and turned to me.

"I fear, Mr. Greator," he said, with a smile, "that I have fetched you here under false pretenses, but at least you



He threw open the window and leaned forth.

have saved an old man from his own company, which is, after all, somewhat dull fellowship."

"No," said I, echoing his smile. "I have been myself preserved from the hard chairs of a very crowded taproom and the quarrelsome attentions of half drunken farmers."

"Come, come," said he genially, "you must not give the Swan a villainous reputation."

"Oh, it was not I," I answered lightly, keeping up the triviality, "but a young gentleman of the Gwent."

Mr. Kesteven ceased to smile. "May I ask his name?" he asked.

"Montgomery, I believe, but I understand we are sworn friends now, so that no harm is done."

"Montgomery!" he repeated slowly. "Yes, I have heard the name—a very young and thoughtless man," and he regarded me with a certain reflectiveness.

But it was not of Montgomery I thought when I went to bed, but of the window and the silence of the night, with the moonlight striking on Kesteven's head. Why had he thrown open

the casement and discharged me, so to say, from my obligation as policeman? For that was how I interpreted his words.

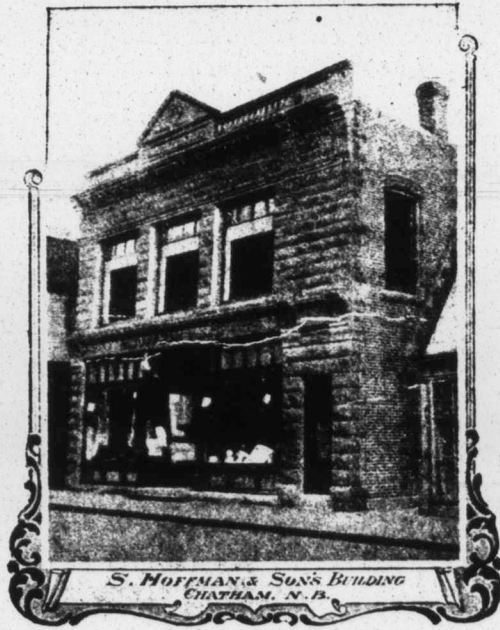
CHAPTER III.

BEFORE breakfast I had the opportunity to make a narrower inspection of the castle as it appeared from without. The morning was fine, the air of those hills delicate and stimulating, and the sunlight struck the woods and valleys with a golden glory. Smoking a cigarette, I strolled round the edifice, surveying with admiring eyes the details of the design. The entrance by the portcullis lay between two solid drum towers, very formidable to look on. The battlements, which were extremely plain and by no means perfect, the machicolations being worn into great chasms here and there, stood two stories away from the base of the castle, and three if the bottom of the moat be counted. Upon the one side of the irregular square which the buildings made the stonework, as I have said, had fallen into disrepair, and, indeed, no rooms

were habitable here. The detritus of centuries had dowed over into the courtyard, and the stones were heaped in a solid accumulation and overgrown with masses of huge Irish ivy. The southern face of the castle was, so to speak, but a hill of rock. It was at the junction of the southern and western walls that the keep stood, itself raised some twenty feet above the level of the battlements and the termination of the habitable portion of the fortress. The moat, which was some ten feet deep, was grown upon with grass, and its sides were covered with blackberry and furze and divers wild creepers. Completing my circuit of the castle, I struck upon a stream which ran in a full body through the park and, reaching the verge of the woodland, leaped suddenly into a torrent and scattered into a waterfall down the steep face of the hill. While I was wandering upon the margin, watching the tide and swirl of the tiny eddies with lazy satisfaction, I encountered my host, who greeted me courteously.

"You are admiring my little brook,"

(Continued on page 7.)



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To-day we announce the opening of the most important shopping event of the year. The remarkable success these great sales of Dry Goods, High Grade Suits and Trousers for men and boys. Furnishing goods, Hats and Shoes, etc., have met with in the past, call for even greater effort. This year we have more elaborately and carefully planned than ever. It is a wonderful showing, the like of which has never been seen here before.

Weeks—months of earnest effort have been spent in selecting for this event, merchandise that in character and variety cannot be excelled. Cut prices prevail. The value given is remarkable. It is the sale "without a rival". The crowds will be wild over our Low Prices and we will not deny that the most servicable goods will go first. So everybody be here. All roads these days certainly lead to the Great Sale at Hoffmans'.

A Stock of over \$30,000 Selling at Bargain Prices. Read! Read! Read!

MEN'S FINE SUITS

A variety including the makes of all the Leading Manufacturers in Canada. The best stock of suits ever offered at this store. We simply want to sell them now at these prices. Men's \$8.00 Suits \$5.25, of worsted and fancy chevots, single or double breasted, broad shoulders, all the latest kinds, made to wear well and hold their shape to the end. Men's \$6.00 and \$7.50 suits at \$3.75 and \$4.25.

Mothers, What do You Think of This?

Boys' \$3.50 suits for \$2.35. Boys' \$4.00 and \$4.50 suits \$3.25 and \$3.50. Boys' \$5.00 and \$6.00 suits at \$3.75 and \$4.25. Boys' two piece suits regular \$2.75 suits for \$2.00. Men's Trousers, Men's \$3.00 trousers for \$1.98, Men's \$2.50 trousers for \$1.45, Men's \$1.35 trousers for 98c.

Men's Shirts, Underwear, Hosiery and Suspenders.

Fully as great values here as in the men's clothing told of above, men's heavy strong working shirts, regular 60c and 75c, now at 40c and 45c, 40c and 50c. Strong Shirts at 30c and 38c. Men's Summer Underwear, regular 30c, 35c, 40c, 50c, 60c and 75c, now for 23c, 25c, 30c and 35c. Men's Black Cotton Hose, 3 for 25c. Men's Cotton Hose, fine grade, 4 for 25c. Men's Suspenders at 10c, 15c, and 20c are double money anywhere.

Men's Hats and Caps at Half Price during this Great Sale.

Boys' Knee Pants, always 70 and 80c, for 40 and 48c. Boys' Buster Brown Norfolk Suits, ages 4 to 8, were \$4.00, now \$2.60. A Crash in Cravenette Rain Coats for Men. \$10.00 and \$12.00 Cravenette Rain Coats, the latest coat made, here at \$5.50 and \$6.25. Young Men's Suits, Double Breasted, fine mixtures in dark brown and grays, worth \$6.50 and \$9.00, at \$4.25 and \$5.20. Trunks, Valises, Suit Cases, etc., will be sold at the very Lowest Prices during this Great Sale.

Hoffman's Great Sale of Dry Goods will Distance all Competition from the standpoint of Qualities and Prices we will charge.

The surest method of proving the value of an article is to compare it with the same thing elsewhere. All our goods are of standard qualities, similar fabrics like which you will find in most other stores. Compare the qualities, finish, widths, etc., and you'll quickly reach the conclusion that Hoffmans' is the place to buy. Our store is the brightest in the province—more floor area than any three Chatham stores put together. It will be no wonder that this great sale will immediately assume the position of being first and foremost beyond all question the most important in Chatham this season. We are able to make price concessions which will establish new records for wonderful values in this, Hoffmans' establishment.

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Silk Waists, white and colored, all sizes, regular prices \$3.25, \$3.75 and \$4.50, now for \$1.98 and \$2.65. 500 yards Colored Prints in light and dark colors, 8c. quality for 6c. 900 yards Colored Prints, fast colors, 12c. quality, for 9c. 1700 yards White and Gray Cottons, 12c. quality for 9c, 6 and 7c. quality for 5½c, 9c. quality for 6½c. 500 yards Striped Shaker Flannel, 6c. quality for 4½c, 7 and 8c. quality for 5½ and 6c, 10 and 12c. quality for 8 and 10c.

Bed Spreads, Sheetting, Pillow Cases and Muslins.

25c. Unbleached Sheetting at 20c. per yard, 1-3-4 yards wide. 18c. Pillowing, Bleached, 45 inches wide, for 13c. 175 White Bed-Spreads at \$1.19. \$1.50 White Spreads at 98c. On account of the backward weather we will clear all our Muslins at Half Price.

50 dozen Women's black cotton hose, regular 15c, Sale price 10c, 35 dozen women's colored hose in brown colors, etc., regular 25c. Sale price 12c. Children's black cotton hose from 5c to 8c. White duck for suitings regular 15c. for 10c. per yard. Lawn waists, \$1.00 lawn waists all dainty new styles and perfect fitting. Sale price 58c. Curtain muslin 84c a yard for 12c, 36 inches wide. 15c. shirtings, for 9c. Goods made for fall but we decided to put them on now. A 15c. fabric at this sale for 9c. 15 only, ladies' cloth skirts, prettily trimmed, regular \$4.75, Sale price, \$2.25. Regular \$5.50 skirts here for \$3.75. Great reduction in black sateen undershirts, \$1.50 undershirts for 90c.

Silks, Dress Goods, Wash Goods, Linens, Carpets and Boys' Wash Suits at Half Prices.

Men's boots and shoes \$3.00 shoes now for \$2.19, \$2.50 for \$1.48, \$2.00 value for \$1.10. Women's shoes equally as low. Women's corsets at half prices, Women's gloves at half price, Women's hats at half price, everything will be sold as low as possible, such as floor cloths, curtains, towelings, gingham, Ladies' coats, Hammocks, etc. etc.

At this season of the year many manufacturers and importers are anxious to close out special lots before inventory, and by paying cash down we are able to offer our patrons the biggest kind of bargains. Don't overlook any of them but come in and take advantage of this Golden Opportunity.

Remember \$2.00 worth of Good Dependable Merchandise for \$1.00. This great sale starts Saturday morning at 8.30, Sharp. Come at once to this greatest sale of them all.

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